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THE FRONT COVER

This Barnum and Bailey half sheet dates from about 1897. Printed by The Courier Company in Buffalo, it combines motifs sure to inflame the imaginations of young boys–and in many cases their fathers. The wild animals, mostly carnivores, at the top of the bill are intended to ignite that spark of controlled danger so dear to the hearts of children. In the middle is the iconic depiction of a pretty girl on a horse. For obvious reasons it is the most common image in all of circus printing.

The lower picture offers the vicarious thrill and excitement of an ancient Roman chariot race. So there it is, danger, a pretty girl, and adventure all grouped together, but only under the big top of The Greatest Show on Earth. Who could resist? Ringling Art Museum, Tibbals Digital Collection.

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Your officers are anxious to receive your comments about the Circus Historical Society and the *Bandwagon.*

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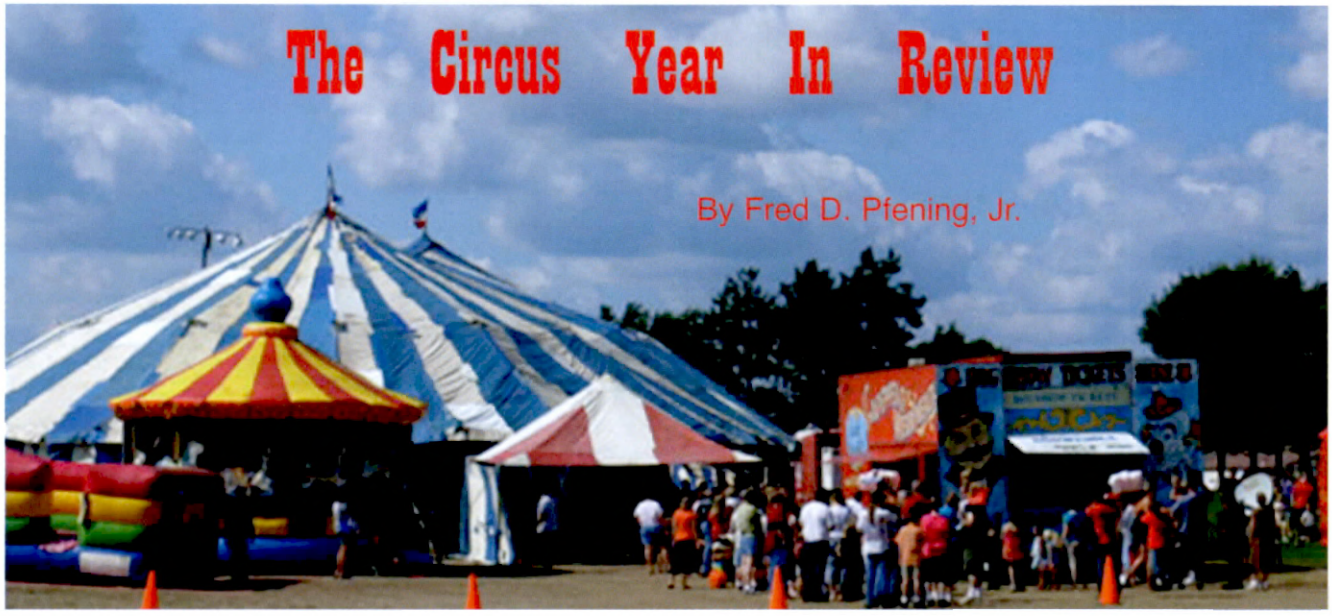
The Circus Year In Review

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.



Culpepper & Merriweather lot scene.

The big news of the 2009 circus was Feld Entertainment touring four circuses, two under canvas. There were no three ring under canvas shows. The number of quick-change acts multiplied. The Cirque du Soliel owner took a thirty-five million dollar trip into space.

The 139th edition of Ringling-Barnum, titled Zing, Zang, Zoom opened in Tampa, Florida on January 7, 2009. The magical themed show was produced by Kenneth and Nicole Feld.

Featured acts included Taba Maluenda with eleven tigers; illusionist Alex Ramos; Gabriella Zebrine, silks; the Olate's dogs; seventeen Chinese performers with Swinging Logs; double cannon with Ekaterine Borzikove and Tina Miser; Joe Frisco with eleven elephants; four troupes from Russia on Russian Swings; Clara Rutz and Fabio Melo, up-side-down act and the Fernando family on two space wheels.

The *New York Times* had this to say about the show: "Five minutes into each performance of 'Zing Zang Zoom,' the new magical menagerie from the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, an 8,500-pound elephant named Asia seems to vanish abruptly in a grand illusion. Is it possible this disappearing act presages the future of the circus itself?

"The down economy has taken its toll on working-class families, the traditional core audience of Ringling, a show-business perennial that offended circus purists by abandoning its classic three rings three years ago. And competitors, both nouveau and non, have proliferated, from Cirque du Soleil to New York's Big Apple Circus.

Ringling-Barnum Red unloading at Meadowlands in March. Paul Gutheil photo.

"Furthermore when Ringling's 139th edition arrives Thursday at Madison Square Garden, audiences will be leafleted by animal-welfare protesters following a six-week trial in federal court where the circus answered charges that it mistreats the very symbol of the show: its elephants. And even the traditional opening-night post performance gala has been canceled for the first time in decades.

"Big Bertha, as circus folk call Ringling, is under siege as never before. Kenneth Feld, the company's 60-year-old producer, dismissed any idea that Ringling is no longer the Greatest Show on Earth. 'We have survived—and thrived-through every upheaval, every world war, every election, every economic crisis, and even 9/11,' he said. 'And now we are the nation's entertainment security blanket.'

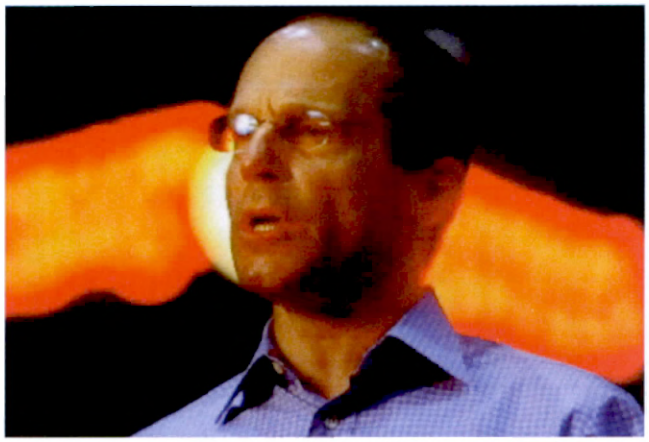
"Experts say the show could benefit from the economic meltdown. 'The circus is recession-proof—or at least, Ringling is,' said William B. Hall, a 75-year-old circus producer in Churchville, Pa., who has observed it since the 1950s. 'It's about escape and family.'

"And value, which is king: McDonald's sales are up, Wal-Mart revenues have bounced, and the movie industry has seen a box office surge in audiences and ticket sales.

"'For many families now a trip to Disney World is out of the question, but a drive to Ringling can give the kids a vacation for an afternoon,' said Thomas J. Crangle, an independent event-marketing consultant in Las Vegas.

"The recession has benefited the circus in other ways: excess railroad capacity and the oil-price collapse have been boons to Mr. Feld's enormous global transportation operations, including both its mile-long circus trains.

"Nevertheless the future use of Ringling's emblem--the elephant--is threatened in United States District Court in



Kenneth Feld, CEO of Feld Entertainment.

Washington, where closing arguments took place last week. The lawsuit turns on whether, under the 1973 Endangered Species Act, it is legal to chain the company's 54 Asian elephants and prod them with pointed bullhooks. (Circus executives call them "guides.")

"'We don't think a circus is a good environment for animals like elephants,' said Jonathan R. Lovvorn, counsel for the Fund for Animals, one of four plaintiffs in the case. He said the chaining and hooking amounts to abuse.

"In court Ringling denied any abuse and marshaled veterinary records, saying that the care exceeded federal regulations. Ringling also cited its $5 million, 200-acre conservation center in Polk City, Fla., where 22 elephants have been born since 1992.

"Mr. Feld said he couldn't discuss the lawsuit (a judge is expected to rule in several months), adding: 'Performers come and go, but the constant factor has been the elephants. They are our most valuable asset, so why would we ever do anything to treat them badly?' He added that domesticated elephants have been working with humans for centuries.

"The company has long bested animal-rights challengers in the courts. In 2006 a jury in Fairfax County, Va., found that Ringling did not harm or conspire against the advocacy group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. The organization had sued, claiming that Mr. Feld and his associates orchestrated a huge conspiracy, sending agents into the organization and other animal-rights groups to monitor their activities. With the latest court case, Mr. Lovvorn said, the narrow issue involved made it different from previous lawsuits.

"Though Ringling's arena crowd pleasers have been disparaged in comparison to Cirque du Soleil's high-end shows in the United States, Europe and South America, the privately held Montreal-based Soleil has always rejected the notion that it competes with Ringling.

"Mr. Feld agreed that Soleil has 'a different niche, a different experience and a different audience.' And these days Soleil shows are hard hit in the Las Vegas recession malaise; its higher-priced tickets are, unthinkably, being discounted.

"Ringling benefits from its 'ticket price, which isn't exactly a loss-leader, but it gets people into the tent,' said David Rosenwasser, director of the Greater St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau in Missouri and an experienced arena manager.

"Mr. Feld said circus attendance is up 12 percent from last year. But with discounting Ringling is charging less for tickets now and is offering, at the Garden, some tickets for $5 with promotional coupons. Mr. Feld acknowledged that average ticket prices were down 7 percent to 8 percent from last year, presenting this as a plus. 'We are the Wal-Mart of the entertainment business, affordable for everyone.'

"Drawing in audiences with saturation television coverage, school promotions, shopper deals and ethnically targeted mailings, Ringling 'has made an art of selling their merchandise,' Mr. Crangle said, pointing to child catchers like the $20 Astro Light Swords. Most event producers hand over 30 to 50 percent of merchandise sales to arenas, but Ringling keeps 100 percent, Mr. Crangle said. The markup can be four times the cost. "Though arenas make money on soda, alcohol and parking, they accede to the Ringling contract in order to attract crowds and excitement. 'Some of the arena operators will lose face in their local communities if they don't get Ringling,' Mr. Rosenwasser said.

"The prices Mr. Feld charges for concession items have not increased this year, he said, but revenues 'are the same, though my first thought in the recession was that concessions would drop.'

"The Ringling cavalcade includes three touring circus shows visiting 120 cities a year; 10 million customers see each new arena show as it travels 30,000 miles during the nearly two-year run.

"But the circus is just a unit of Feld Entertainment, a third-generation family-owned private company started in 1967 that bills itself as the largest live entertainment production company in the world; it is headquartered in Vienna, Va., near Washington. Its many other proliferating entities include 'Disney on Ice' touring companies, 'Disney Live!' theatrical shows and a consumer products division that creates the novelty merchandise.

"But the company is no stranger to failure: its 'Three Musketeers' musical flopped on Broadway in 1984, and its $25-million one-ring tent show, 'Barnum's Kaleidoscape,' failed in 2001, to be replaced by Ringling's less-costly truck-transported Gold unit, also tented, which visits smaller locales.

"Its newest business, Feld Motor Sports, presents 600 performances a year of truck, motorcycle and drag-racing shows in North America and Europe. In 2007, when the purchase price of the motor-sports businesses was reported as $205 million--the biggest deal in Feld's 40-year history—analysts said that annual revenues were more than $150 million and growing.

"'People were shocked at the dollar amount,' said Mr. Crangle, the consultant in Las Vegas. 'But it's a perfect fit for Ringling,' which intends to promote the business internationally, where audiences can enjoy monster trucks smashing into stock cars sans translators. But like a currency arbitrageur, Mr. Feld lamented that international profits have 'grown more slowly because--with the euro down 27 percent--we took a hit.'

"As a private company Feld has always been guarded about its financial data, but analysts estimated its pre-recession annual revenues to be more than $600 million, and commercial rating agencies have published profit estimates of $50 million to $60 million. Mr. Feld's personal fortune has been estimated at more than $700 million by *Forbes*.

Alana and Nichole Feld, Vice Presidents of Feld Entertainment.

"'The circus is tremendously lucrative,' Mr. Rosenwasser said. It was puzzling, then, to circus buffs when Ringling canceled its venerable opening-night gala, Mr. Hall, the veteran circus producer, said.

"The party wasn't canceled because the circus couldn't afford it, Mr. Feld said, but rather because 'it's an extravagance that isn't appropriate at this time.'

"He was willing to spend more than $15 million on 'Zing Zang Zoom,' his most expensive offering. When Ringling axed the three-ring show and enhanced the pyrotechnics and video projections, some critics derided it as the 'ringless brothers circus,' saying that the show emphasized technology over artistry. but sophisticated arena audiences demanded a 'contemporary show,' Mr. Feld replied, adding: 'Paying customers are not coming to pay for technology. They come for the talent.' Some purists, however, take issue. No rings and high technology were 'deplorable--they just lost their mystique,' said Buckles Woodcock, 74, a retired elephant trainer who runs Buckles Blog (bucklesw.blogspot.com). 'I understand that times change, but the money Ringling spends on all those pyrotechnics they could spend on hiring more acts.'

Ringling-Barnum Blue Unit. Jim Hall Photo.

"He sighed, then added: 'But they're making money. Business is business. And the parade moves on.'

The November 12 *Chicago Tribune* published this review of the Red Unit.

Zing Zang Zoom: "Each edition of the Greatest Show on Earth is a blend of circus traditionalism—elephants, tigers, Chinese acrobats—and whatever the great minds at Feld Entertainment think is necessary to attract and stimulate today's over-attracted and over-stimulated kids. Apparently, the thing of the moment is wizardry, and I suspect we have Harry Potter to thank for that.

"A high-wire version of Quidditch would doubtless have brought up pesky rights issues. But the Harry-less 139th edition of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus still contains a lot more magic and illusions than any of its recent predecessors.

"'Circus celebrities' (the name Feld gives to its high-paying premium customers) even get to levitate their parents, a nifty trick that they're told will be very useful if they're ever looking for a raise in allowance. Even the ringmaster has been re-christened as the 'Zingmaster.' If it weren't for the absence of sultry assistants and the comforting smell of the pachyderms, you'd think you were watching a David Copperfield show. Or maybe poor Siegfried and Roy (which Feld also produced). In the second act of 'Zing Zang Zoom,' we get to see a tiger disappear.

"I was more interested in seeing the video screen that dominated too many prior editions disappear. And I am happy to note that Ringling Bros. has finally realized that its appeal does and should lie entirely in three dimensions. Now if only it could make that illuminated, blackout-killing concession booth at the back of the arena disappear. This seductive grotto of high-priced plastic is tolerable at intermission; making kids drool and parents hang on to their billfold for the entire show goes way, way too far.

"Otherwise, 'Zing Zang Zoom' is a good time. Illusions are tough to pull off in a massive arena, but these tricks (many executed by clowns) are all remarkably clear and impressive. I confess a weakness for the human cannonball, a specialty act that always delivers a good bang for your buck. In this case, you get two bangs, since 'Zing Zang Zoom' features a twin set of cannonballs, occupied by two glamorous astronauts (if that's the right term), including the Russian Ekaterina Borzikova, not to mention Tina Miser, from exotic Peru. Peru, Indiana.

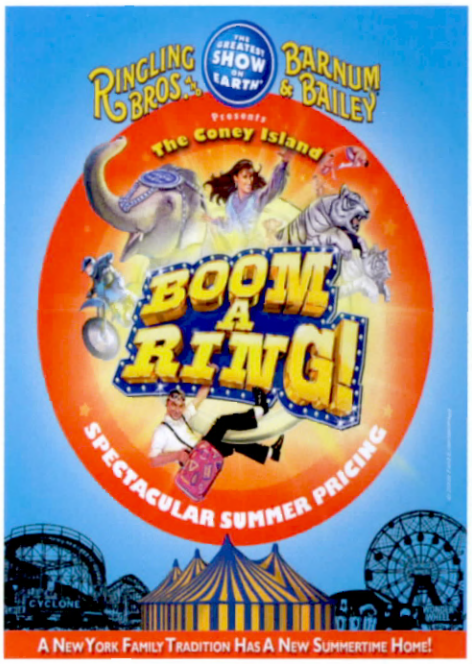
"The wheel of death, which shows up once again, is ready for retirement. But the clowning of Alan 'Tweedy' Digweed (aka Mr. Gravity) was chipper; and this was a welcome return for the head-churning act of Clara Ruiz and Fabio Melo da Silva, who hang themselves from the ceiling and play badminton. All this, zebras, performing pooches and the International Folkloric Dancers. Who said vaudeville was dead? It just ran away with the circus."

The Red Unit played Miami, January 8-18.

The Blue Unit opened its second season in Orlando,

January 14-17.

The Gold Unit played Coney Island in Brooklyn from June 17-September 7 under a European style big top. Glenn Collins reviewed the show for the *New York Times* in its April 17 issue: "O.K., the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus already came to town last month with considerable fanfare. Now, it will be arriving yet again, trading a Manhattan arena for a seaside tent in Coney Island.



Poster used to advertise Ringling-Barnum at Coney Island.

"In a news conference on Friday, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced that Ringling's touring show--called the Gold Unit by the circus, but officially titled the Coney Island Boom-a-Ring--will raise its air-conditioned tent at Surf Avenue and West 21st Street on June 18, for a summer run through Sept. 7. It will be west of the Brooklyn Cyclones' ballpark, on land owned by Taconic Investment Partners.

"For the first time, the Greatest Show on Earth is coming to one of the greatest neighborhoods in New York City--Coney Island," Mr. Bloomberg said. 'It's all part of our program that we're committed to restoring Coney Island's vibrancy.'

"The announcement was the latest salvo in a three-ring struggle over the future of Coney Island between the city and the developer Joseph J. Sitt, chief executive of Thor Equities. In 2006, Mr. Sitt sold the parcel of land where the circus will put up its tent to Taconic Investment Partners for $90 million.

"The city is shepherding a plan for the revival of Coney Island's historic amusement area that would establish a 27-acre entertainment district with 9.4 acres devoted to arcades, freak shows, roller coasters, Ferris wheels and other rides. It would also allow for hotels and 4,500 new apartments.

"But Mr. Sitt has said that the city's plan is not economically feasible, and in the past put forward his own billion-dollar proposal featuring large stores, tall time-share hotels and a smaller amusement park.

BoomA Ring midway at Coney Island. Paul Gutheil photo.

"Mr. Sitt has evicted some perennial entertainment acts, like the Astroland amusement park, but has announced that he would bring in a sideshow, John Strong's Shows, and 25 rides as part of a Festival by the Sea that, he said, would create more than 1,000 jobs.

"The mayor said that the city worked with Taconic to find the land, which will be provided to Ringling at no charge, though the circus will pay its operational costs. Andrew Brent, a spokesman for the mayor, said the city was not paying Taconic for Ringling's use of the land.

"Ringling said it had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to ship a 2,300-seat tent from London. Unlike its two other circus shows, which play in cavernous arenas--the Red Unit, recently at Madison Square Garden and currently in Norfolk, Va., and the Blue Unit, in Fairfax, Va.--the more intimate 5-year-old Gold Unit is a one-ring show for smaller sites.

"'Thanks to the recession, a lot of people may be curtailing their travel plans this summer, and we hope many of them will gravitate to our show,' said Kenneth Feld, Ringling's owner and producer.

"He added: 'We are hoping to become a permanent part of the whole Coney Island revitalization. The mayor has a vision for this neighborhood, and we are proud to be part of that vision.'

"Mr. Feld said a potential deal with Thor Equities had foundered because Ringling could not get a commitment in time 'to get the tent on the water and bring it over from Europe in containers.'

"In a statement, Mr. Sitt said he was 'thrilled' that Ringling was coming to Coney Island, saying it would be a complement to his sideshow. He added that 'all stakeholders must work together to put together a long-term, permanent plan to ensure that this is not a one-summer anomaly.'

"But on Friday, the mayor seemed to express more urgency, saying that 'after this season, if we don't get it going, there's probably no way to put it back together,' referring to the amusement amenities in the neighborhood. He said, though, that the city and Thor Equities were 'not in an impasse at all.

"Although the show will be a first for Ringling in Coney Island, it is not the first time that the company has brought a one-ring tent to New York. After a 20-month, 12-city tour, Mr. Feld took on the Big Apple Circus in Bryant Park with Barnum's Kaleidoscape, a $25 million holiday-season show that folded its tent forever on New Year's Day 2001.

"The more modest Gold Unit travels with seven tigers, seven dachshunds, three elephants and 110 humans--29 of whom are performers. It is currently in Amarillo, in the Texas panhandle, and will travel to Coney Island after a stand in Laredo, on the Mexican border."

The show was presented in an air-conditioned tent made

by Mobile Stadiums, Ltd. in Sheffield, England. The tent seated 2,400 patrons. A foyer tent housed the food court.

In the June 24 edition of his blog Showbiz David, author and historian David Hammarstrom had high praise for the performance: "What a difference a tent makes. And a live band, and the right acts. And the right direction. And the absence of so many things that never should have been there. What a giant difference, indeed. Somehow, Ringling in the mode of simple looks better than it has in years.

"In fact, one ring under a tent may turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to circus chief Kenneth Feld.

"One ring is apparently forcing (or inspiring) him to narrow his focus down to the essentials, down to a taut deference to the acts at hand, and the acts at hand in Boom a Ring! merit the sleek, no-nonsense format they have been given. Mr. Feld has devised a program of remarkable depth, diversity and luster--a program free of the extraneous production gimmicks and frills that have grown oppressive over the years.

"Gone, at last, are so many tired old artifacts of ritual: that creaky rolling platform from which the ringmaster boomed 'Children of all ages!'; kiddies pulled out of the audience onto rumbling floats, waving at us during pedestrian specs; cutesy video screen irritants, opening parades as thinly veiled promos for the circus, half-baked "'story' lines, audience participation ad nauseum, and, well--I will politely refrain from naming everything. You fill in the blanks. Miracle of miracles, they are all GONE.

"Seen opening night in its Coney Island premiere, Ringling's Gold Unit proved to be a fine-tuned circus machine, endowed with a host of top-drawer talents full of inventive sparkle, wisely directed to move forward and to keep moving forward. This is the most professionally produced circus I have seen in years, and what a treat that alone is. Thrillingly to the point, skillfully paced, with crisp clean transitions, and an outstanding musical score that hits the mark. Opening and closing ensemble splashes are picture perfect.

"The live music is produced by but six or seven musicians. The band has been liberated out from under that morose cage-like covering, out where it can be seen. These young players prove once more that nothing can replace a living breathing source of music at the circus.

"Acts? At least five of them are tops in their respective fields, and one of the performers, if he does not already hold Monte Carlo Gold, should. The big contributors include a captivating juggling threesome, unnamed in the program or on the website, who work around and over a table; Diana Vedyashkina's absolutely delightful little Daschund Dogs (a natural tie-in for Nathan's up the street); dancing elephants who can even shake their booties; the exhilarating Negrey Troupe of ground acrobatics; and a comedy cyclist, woven through the performance, who gives the program tremendous sophistication.

"His name is Justine Case, a character from Australia who courts a French accent and a need to vent his amusingly messed up life in the mode of a stand-up comic. Case is, indeed, about the greatest circus comedian-performer I've ever seen. He enters on a bike with suitcase in hand, immediately grabbing our attention. And he works wonders on a wild variety of wheeled configurations while monologuing on.

Inside the big top at Coney Island. Paul Gutheil photo.

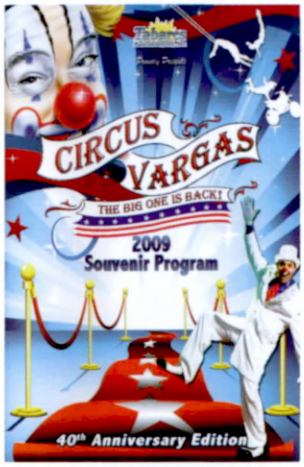
"'Maybe the French can help the Americans a little,' he quips early in the party, wryly referencing the overpowering reach of that Montreal monster. Case's quirky humor is adult without being inappropriate for the younger set. I say to Monte Carlo: Just send this genius the Gold, no appearances necessary.

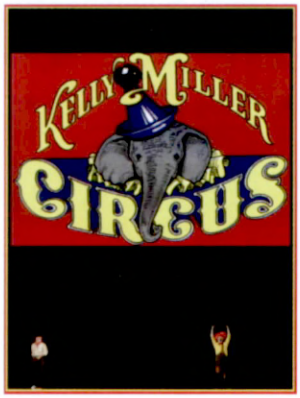
"Has Feld erred in any way? To be sure, there are arguable missteps that fall short of the overall excellence in motion, weak segments that might prevent Boom A Ring! from reaching its full potential as a hot word-of-mouth must see. Most critically, opening night went on without the high wire services of Los Scalos. This turn, still featured in a video teaser on the Ringling website, looks amply exciting, just the sort of an episode to deliver a degree of air power to match all of the terrific clowning, acrobats, and animal antics on the ground. And this show needs more in the air.

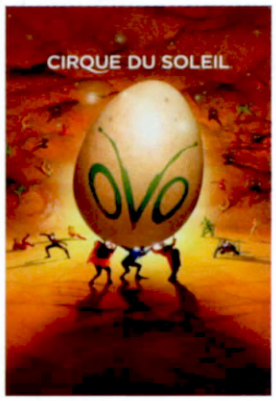
"Liina Aunola, who cuts a recklessly expressive figure, makes the biggest impression aloft on a cloud swing, if only she were not tethered to lifelines. Many of our so-called 'aerialists' today don't even try to hide their marionette strings, in full view snapping on the wires as if to be getting ready to go to work and clock in. What a shame. 'What are those wires for,' I heard somebody whispering behind me, as is always the case. Still, Aunova's tempestuous persona, even with her pretending, reminded me of the older, bolder era when sawdust divas made perilous poetry swinging high and wide--and free.

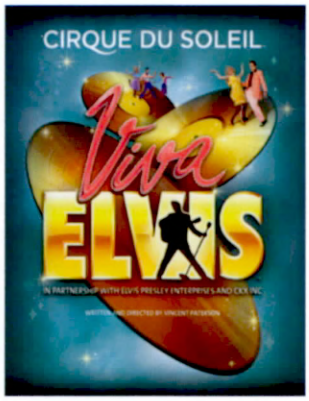
"A belabored perch act by Valentin Dinov and Borislava Vaneva involving one of them peddling a small bike up and down in a half-moon shaped track was so anchored to wires as to make it pointless. And one might ask if the tediously drawn out crossbow exploits of Martti Peltonen are worth a couple of audience pleasing payoffs.

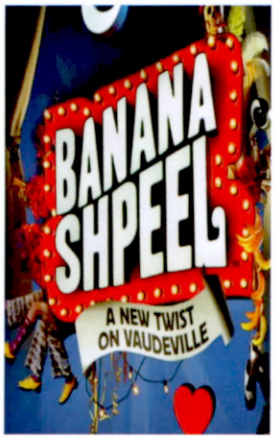
"Most conspicuously questionable is another aerialist, the hefty Vicenta Pages, who follows her perky stint directing a gorgeous class of white tigers with a buxomly (to put it discretely) work out on roman rings. Ms. Pages' arduous attack, in fact, made me fear that under its weight the tent structure might lose integrity and end up in our breathless laps. I'd recommend that she stick to her day job with the

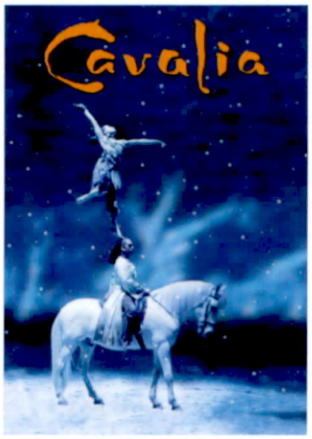












2009

PROGRAMS

tigers and leave the rings to lighter wings.

"Boom a Ring! also offers the wheel of death as well as three motorbikes whirling inside a cage while a woman stands perfectly still in the middle of it all. Another rich discovery are the gifted comedy duo of Stanislav Knyazkov and Vasily Trifonov who add more fresh seasoning to the comedy mix. And the show soars down the finish line with a fabulous exhibition of ground tumbling by the Negrey Troupe. What a sendoff! Then comes a quick and concise last splash by the company, as perfectly precise and sleek as, overall, the show itself. Director Philip William McKinley (or Mr. Feld directing Mr. McKinely--whomever) deserves high marks for merging the elements with taste, brevity, and buoyancy.

"Will Boom-a-Ring! turn the corner on Coney, helping to revive an aging seaside park while making a strong mark of its own at the ticket windows? I'd say they have an uphill battle on their hands. Other then Cirque du Soleil, American shows have rarely if ever done well across extended engagements, and I'm not sure that all the vital signs are in place here to win over healthy houses from a very fickle public.

"Nonetheless, Kenneth Feld may find the inspiration he needs to forge ahead in the same robust direction, with a resolve that I am convinced he never felt while straddled to his short-lived artsy, Cirque du Soleil-envious Barnum's Kaleidoscape. Here he is on the populist ground that he is at his best working. So, indeed, he may hatch a brilliant new concept for tented Ringling tours. And how ironic it would be were the Feld family, who falsely claim to have 'saved' Ringling by moving it from the tents to arenas in 1957, compelled to move it back from whence it came.

"How long has it been since we have witnessed such top-flight showmanship under canvas? In a single ring, the Big Show struck a powerful note of authority, looking, acting, and feeling whole again. And the word 'greatest' seemed more fitting than it has in too many seasons. Better still, the Felds are offering the customer a decent chair at Boom A Ring! for as little as ten dollars. Now that must count as the best damn live entertainment bargain on the planet.

Poster advertising the Gold Unit in Italy.

"The Ringling brothers should be smiling up on the big lot. It's a circus through and through."

After Coney Island the Gold Unit was sent to Europe. The route was Milan, Italy, October 21-25; Sevilla, Spain, November 5-8; Maiega, Spain November 19-15; Valencia, Spain, November 19-22; Madrid, Spain November 16-December 6 and Zaragoza, Spain, December 10-13

But hold your horses—a second Gold unit, titled Illuscination, opened in West Palm Beach on December 23. The acts included David Da Vinci, magic; motorcycles on high wire; double low wire; musical clowns; Heidi and Cassidy Heriott, big and little horse; Havana Troupe, double bar act and teeterboard; hair hang juggling; Brian McMillian, lions; upside-down loop to loop walking; Shao Lin Kung Fu, sword play; and Ramon Equeda, three elephants.

A press release stated that, "'Illuscination is all about magic. We have some great illusionists for this year's edition,' says Angelina Quevedo, general manager of Ringling's Gold Unit. 'Illuscinator David DaVinci will particularly dazzle audiences. The whole show is upbeat and fast. We have performers from all over the world—some beautiful talent from Cuba, Australia, Ukraine. Some also from South America and Russia. Overall, we're representing nearly 14 different nations. And of course, there are the prerequisite acrobats, aerialists and animals.'

"'We have beautiful animals,' Quevedo says. 'We have three majestic Asian elephants and seven lions—even a rare white lion.' Heidi Harriott, who like Quevedo is a Sarasota native, will entertain with her four horses;

"The Gold Unit is a scaled-down, single-ring version of the big Ringling circus. It travels entirely by land, using more than 15 tractor-trailer trucks, 30 travel trailers and 11 equipment containers to move from town to town."

On January 19 Ringling-Barnum announced the birth of a male Asian elephant at their Elephant Conservation Center. He was named Barack. His mother was fourteen–year-old Bonnie, who was also born at the center.

For the first time ever the Feld organization toured four circus units, one under canvas.

On February 12, 2009, the Feld organization reported a record year according to the *Atlanta Business Chronical*. "The recession is refusing to enter the three rings of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Kenneth Feld, chairman and CEO of Feld Entertainment, should know. His late Father Irvin Feld, first got involved with the circus in 1957. And bought it in 1967.

"'In times like this, people want an escape,' Feld said in a recent trip to Atlanta; We have been the ultimate escape for people in this country for 100 years, in the depression, they did huge business.'

"Feld Entertainment, a family-owned business, doesn't just own Ringling Bros. It also owns Disney on Ice, Disney Live, and as of last year, it owns Motor Sports, which puts on Monster Jams around the country.

"'We are the premier company in the world producing live family entertainment.' Feld said. In all we do 3,800 events in 59 countries a year. There are more than 10 performances of Feld Entertainment a day.'

"In Atlanta and Georgia, Feld said, more than 550,000 people attend a Feld production every year. Three years ago, the Gwinnett Arena began hosting the circus' gold unit (which plays in smaller venues) in addition to the annual performances at

Phillips.

"'For us Atlanta is one of the best family entertainment markets in the country.' Feld said. Monster Jam's business is up 18 percent from last year, and the circus business is up 12 percent.

"'It's the biggest year we have ever had,' Feld said. 'In most markets, the advance ticket sales are flat. We keep it affordable. People want value, in this environment, where everybody is cutting back, we never do anything to diminish our product.'

"Just about every aspect of Feld Entertainment is unusual. It has the largest privately owned train in the country. It owns more portable ice floors than any other entity in the world.

"'It's still a family business, and the family owns 100 percent of the business,' Feld said. 'We have this unique niche that's worldwide, that brings unbelievable spectacles to your doorstep.'"

On December 30, 2009 Feld Entertainment announced that a federal court had dismissed a case filed more than nine years ago by animal special interest groups who sought to ultimately outlaw elephants in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. In its ruling, "the Court finds that Mr. Rider [an expert witness for the plaintiff] is essentially a paid plaintiff and in fact a witness who is not credible, and therefore affords no weight to his testimony regarding the matters discussed herein, i.e., the allegations related to his standing to sue."

"Today's decision reinforces the fact that plaintiffs' manufactured litigation was based on the untruthful testimony of a paid plaintiff and witness who the Court found received at least $190,000 in payments as his sole source of income over the past eight years by animal special interest groups, their lawyers and an entity controlled by those lawyers, the Wildlife Advocacy Project. Furthermore, the Court ruled that 'based upon his failure to complain, the Court finds that Mr. Rider either (1) did not witness elephant mistreatment when he was employed by FEI or (2) any mistreatment he did witness did not affect him to the extent that he suffered an aesthetic or emotional injury.'

"'We are gratified with today's decision because it is a victory for elephants over those whose radical agenda, if adopted, could lead to the extinction of the species,' said Kenneth Feld. 'We look forward to focusing on what we do best–providing quality care to our elephants and delivering unique family entertainment options to the public.'"

The Cirque du Soleil circus factory in Montreal produced a number of new shows in 2009.

A new under canvas show opened in Montreal, April 2 to July 12, titled OVO. Showbiz David reviewed the show in San Francisco on November 29 in his usual cogent manner: "Bravo, bugs of the big top!

"The 'wow' factor of authentic circus is abundantly on display at this latest offering from Cirque du Soleil. OVO is a brilliantly scored work of cold seductive power, perhaps a little too cold and faceless for some, that just misses the mark of a true masterpiece, blame a fatally directed second half.

"The stage seems to be set, pre-show, with the entrance of figures in protective gear and gadgets, wandering slowly,

Performers in Cirque Du Soleil's OVO.

Guy Laliberte, in center, about to leave for outter space.

apprehensively into a tent of gigantic cobwebs and wild nocturnal sounds of nature. Are they agents on a mission to suppress or eradicate creepy crawly things? Oddly, the atmosphere begins to feel more like an outer space spook show. This could be fun. Certainly, the bizarre costumes prove to be. According to program notes, insects will 'crawl, flutter, play, fight and look for work.' They will also perform circus tricks that will make you quicky forget that they are bugs from a 'colorful ecosystem teaming with life.'

"But those intriguing agents in protective gear never return. And there goes a promising comedic conflict. A huge egg surfaces, causing confusion and excitement among ants and crickets, scrabs and spiders. Will it eventually crack wide open? Out of it, what might appear? While you wait to find out, settle back, turn your brain off to narrative nonsense, and hold your cockroaches: A circus is coming! This one packs riveting artistry drawn from China, Russia, Europe, and the Ukraine, much of it, no doubt, shaped, badgered, honed and polished to incredible new heights by the demanding masters of matriculation up in Montreal, to whom I toss flu-free kisses." Tickets prices were between $65.00 and $250.00.

A new Soleil theater show, originally titled Vaudeville, had a soft opening at the Chicago Theater, in Chicago on November 19. By then the title was changed to Banana Shpeel. Chris Jones, *Tribune* theater critic wrote: "From 'Ka' to 'Kooza and 'Alegria' to 'Zumanity,' the Cirque du Soleil has conquered tents, casinos, theme parks and arenas in almost every corner of the world. It has achieved total dominance of the high-stakes world of Las Vegas entertainment. It has wrestled with the music of the Beatles and the infamous personality of Criss Angel. Come January in Vegas, it will even take on the biggest entertainment icon of them all: Elvis.

"But even as it has cut its extraordinary swath through global culture over the past quarter century, Cirque has assiduously stayed away from one huge segment of the live entertainment industry.

"Proscenium theaters. Cirque has ignored these mostly historic, occasionally iconic jewels that pepper American downtowns, make up the chain of Broadway and, in the case of the beloved Chicago Theatre, emotionally embody a night on the town.

"It is a gap Cirque's derivative competitors have shrewdly exploited, creating an endless array of Euro-style, animal-free shows such as 'Cirque Dreams,' 'Cirque Ingenieux,' 'Cirque Imagination' and (coming to Skokie beginning Nov. 28) 'Cirque Le Masque.'

"But with the arrival of Cirque du Soleil's new 'Banana Shpeel' at the Chicago Theatre (it moves to New York's New Beacon Theatre in February), it is a gap that exists no more. 'Banana Shpeel'--originally billed as a distinctive fusion of vaudeville, clowning and musical comedy--will be Cirque's first foray into the world of legitimate theater. Or will it?

"For commercial theater is a byzantine world dominated by rules, agents, unions, writers, composers, star names and ways of operating very foreign to the famously esoteric, famously creative and famously confidential Cirque process of 'création.' It is a less-than-controllable world in which Cirque, for all its sophistication, lacks experience. By its own admission.

Guy Laliberte with his clown nose ready for space ride.

"'Banana Shpeel' will officially be unpeeled Dec. 2 in Chicago. And those who have bet against Cirque in the past have usually found themselves stuck on black with the wheel showing red. But the story so far of 'Banana Shpeel' has included some slip-ups.

"'We had a lot of good stuff right from the start,' says Serge Roy, the cheerfully frank Cirque producer in charge of 'Banana Shpeel.' The ebullient Roy is sitting in the balcony of the Chicago Theatre, even as the remarkably calm and focused director, David Shiner, forges (and re-forges) the high-stakes show on the stage below. 'The problems came,' says Roy, unperturbed by the admission, 'when we started to put everything together. We were getting into a world in which we are not at ease.'

"Those problems were, in essence, the hiring and firing of the show's two stars: Annaleigh Ashford (who was a long-time Glinda in the Chicago production of 'Wicked') and Michael Longoria (who performed as Frankie Valli in 'Jersey Boys' on Broadway). In September, both were seen (and can still be seen via YouTube) on the season finale of NBC's 'America's Got Talent,' performing a signature number from 'Banana Shpeel.'

"They are now gone, their characters written out of the show. The number they were singing is gone too. The original composer, Laurence O'Keefe (another big Broadway name who penned the score to 'Legally Blonde: The Musical'), has also come and gone from the project. All of his music has been cut from 'Shpeel.'

"'We make changes like that all the time during our creation process,' Roy says. 'The only difference is that, usually, nobody hears about them.'

"Indeed not. Internal creative decisions at Cirque typically have stayed internal, which is the way most businesses, creative and otherwise, like to keep things. And (with the notable exception of its 'Criss Angel Believe' show in Vegas) Cirque has always de-emphasized individuals and emphasized the creative whole.

"Millions of people have seen 'O' in Las Vegas. Very few of them would remember the names of any of the performers they saw. It's the same with 'Ka,' 'Mystere,' 'Quidam,' you name it.

"But unfair as it may be, the firing of a troupe of unknown Ukrainian acrobats in Montreal is a very different matter from nixing three respected Broadway names before rehearsals in Chicago.

"When Cirque went to agents in New York, seeking top music-theater talent for a show widely described as Cirque's first foray into musical theater, the presence of those stars

Banana Shpeel performers on stage in Chicago. Soleil photo.

was a legitimizing factor. And when they were removed prior to the process of moving to Chicago, the news spread quickly through the New York theater community (and reached this reporter).

"Initially, at least, Cirque seemed surprised by all the fuss. But they are now talking about it openly.

"Roy and Shiner are at pains to say that the decision to write out Ashford and Longoria had nothing to do with their work or talent. It was simply a decision to move in a new creative direction. In a one-word statement issued through her representative, Ashford said she was 'shocked' by the turn of events that removed her from the show.

'"Banana Shpeel' had grown out of a desire of Cirque founder Guy Laliberte's to create a vaudeville show. Partially as a response to the economic troubles in its core Vegas market, Cirque has been doing a lot of brand extension recently, including a foray into magic. Because high-end magic tends to be dominated by individuals who guard their tricks and their personal brand, that meant Cirque had to break its no-star rule and get into creative bed with Angel.

"Longtime Cirque watchers have also noticed its Vegas portfolio is now shrewdly segmented so that there are shows appealing to many sections of the market. 'Ka,' an operatic show created by Robert Lepage, holds down the arty high end, while 'Criss Angel Believe' attracts a much younger, more blue-collar crowd. But although its tent shows are now slotted into arenas after exhausting the markets that can support the big tops (Sears Centre Arena in Hoffman Estates has announced a booking of the old tent show 'Alegria'), Cirque has never had the kind of show that could tour.

"To actual theaters.

"So why not create such a show? Madison Square Garden Entertainment, which owns the Chicago and the Beacon, became an enthusiastic partner. Shiner, a highly regarded clowning and physical-theater expert and the creative force behind the hugely successful tent-show 'Kooza,' was called in. Shiner put together a conceptual outline. The initial show-within-a-show concept involved a colorful producer, one Marty Schmelky (played by Jerry Kernion), who is auditioning for his ongoing contemporary vaudeville show, 'Schmelky's Spectacular.' Ashford was to play the producer's singing-and-dancing daughter. Longoria was to play an aspiring actor. The two were to fall in love. Also included: clowning, circus, variety, vaudeville and a Broadway-style love story, replete with much singing and dancing to original O'Keefe numbers.

"But once 'Banana Shpeel' went into rehearsals in Montreal, it became clear that it could not be or do all of those things at once. According to several of the people involved, there were just too many characters requiring too much exposition.

'"The show was becoming too story-based,' Shiner says. 'We also wanted to include clowning and variety. But the story element was outweighing everything else. There just wasn't enough time. . . . So we would have needed to diminish the roles played by Annaleigh and Michael. And we decided that would have been a waste of their huge talents. It all was a learning process for everybody.'

'"It was dragging,' says Roy. 'We wanted to do a show with humor and fun. We never wanted to do a Broadway-type show. We found we weren't comfortable with that. We like to improvise. We like people to have a good time. So we asked ourselves, what would happen if we didn't try to tell that entire story? And once we weren't telling that story, many of the songs were not needed.'

"So Ashford, Longoria and the song stylings of O'Keefe were out. And Cirque, in essence, went back to a world in which it is more comfortable. And within which it has never failed.

'"We wanted to revisit the world of our show,' Shiner says. 'And we wanted to get our arms around it.'

"For sure, Cirque fans will likely notice some new-to-Cirque elements in 'Banana Shpeel,' including dialogue and hard-edged slapstick (and, of course, the proscenium setting). But, at least as Shiner describes it, the 'Shpeel' that will open Dec. 2 has been shorn of its narrative clutter, and now has a very simple plot.

"Various circus acts audition (or are already in Schmelky's show). A core clutch of five clowns (two of whom are Schmelky's assistants) alternately aid and disrupt the auditions. A live band, clowning, comedy, variety, tap-dancing and hip-hop are all included. The style is modern and hard-edged. There is a foot juggler. But there is no Broadway-style book. Not any more.

"Shiner says the clown routines were created from scratch in the studio --very much in the European theatrical tradition--and were always intended to be at the core of 'Banana Shpeel.'

'"Our show,' Shiner says, 'is based in comedy and dance.'

"It will be as simple as that. Cirque has never claimed to have a pretty process. Even during technical rehearsals, Roy continued to tinker. He talked about adding a few more performers, perhaps. He had plans to restage one of the biggest set pieces. 'I'd wish I had a turntable for that,' he said, wistfully, as the remarkable foot juggler works below.

"For his part, Shiner says he plans to keep creating long after Dec. 2. 'For me, the work is never done until the producers say I can't come back,' he says.

"Unlike on Broadway, nothing (and nobody) is frozen in a Cirque production. Its creations change all the time, even decades after their 'création,' and the people who create them say there is no need to change that modus operandi,

just because they happen to now be behind a proscenium arch.

"A few days before the first preview, Daniel Ross, another of the creatives involved in the production, was standing in the lobby of the Chicago Theatre. Once Shiner and Roy leave, Ross will be the one charged with maintaining the show, which Cirque hopes will tour nationally, maybe internationally, after its New York stand for years to come. Ross was asked how things were going.

"It's always the last crunch,' he said, raising his eyebrows and smiling broadly. 'I guess we thrive on that.'"

Soleil again presented Wintuk in the Wamu Theater in Madison Square Garden from November 25 to January 3. The show lasted 2 ½ hours including a 20 minute intermission. This was the third year of a five-year contract with the Garden. The performance was blend of circus acts and Broadway.

David Hammarstrom commented on Wintuk on his blog: "I took a look at some recent reviews of Cirque du Soleil's third season at the Theatre at Madison Square Garden, where Wintuk, a show designed for holiday-happy moppets, seems to be growing in luster and charm. That kindly supporter of all things circus, The New York Times, offered a more affirmative review of this latest return visit. 'Though the plot is little more than an excuse to move from act to act, the performances are invariably impressive,' wrote Ken Jaworowski. Okay, I am falling too; were I back there, I would love to give Wintuk a chance. Seems it has a simple yet doable 'story' premise, good-sounding acts and the big snowfall payoff. Talking Cirque, the pre-Broadway shakedown in the Windy City of its oddball stagecoction, Banana Shpeel, was met with a downbeat notice from the Chicago Tribune's respected theatre-circus critic, Chris Jones, basically echoing a slew of angry consumer reviews. 'cold, chaotic , clipped and cacophonous' is what Jones found. 'There is a great deal to fix before this show opens in New York.' ... BTW: Did you know that the Montreal monster flopped out in the distant past with another try at going legit, a 'musical' presented in arenas called Delirium?"

Saltimbanco was reframed to play arenas. Following a performance in Columbus, Ohio, the *Columbus Dispatch* wrote: "Cirque du Soleil's recent tour of Saltimbanco didn't do as well as previous Cirque productions in Columbus. The French Canadian art-circus sold 25,851 tickets during its two-week run in mid-August at Nationwide Arena. More than 75,000 saw Cirque's Dralion here in 2003, and about 84,000 attended Varekai in 2005—both month long tent runs in the Arena District. More than 61,000 people saw Corteo, which had a month long tent run in 2007 at the Ohio Expo Center. Although the poor economy has affected ticket sales, Cirque du Soleil plans to continue its pattern of visiting Columbus every two years, or so, according to Reggie Lyons, media manager for Cirque touring shows."

Zed opened in Tokyo's Disneyland.

In December Soleil announced its newest show in Las Vegas, Viva Elvis, a salute to the King of Rock and Roll melding Presley's music, films, and newsreel footage with Soleil's brand of circusing. The show opened on February 19, 2010 at the new Aria Casino and Hotel on the strip.

On October 20, 2009 Ian Halperin, biographer of Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté, summed up his subject's life in the British paper *The Independent:* "Guy Laliberté has always had an unusual thirst for life's pleasures. The former street entertainer has spent 30 years building up a multibillion-dollar fortune from a mixture of circus skills, inspirational management and a knack for high-stakes gambling. His Cirque du Soleil is arguably the world's premier show business enterprise, while the parties with which he celebrates his success are legendary. Some might be content with such good fortune, but Laliberté wants more: which is why, at the end of this month, he blasted off on a Russian spacecraft for a 12-day trip.

Banana Shpeel dancers in Chicago.

"The object of that exercise will be to raise awareness of drinking water rights around the world, something Laliberté has been extremely passionate about--having created the One Drop Foundation to promote the cause. (The show will be called 'Moving Stars and Earth for Water'.) But a likely side effect will be that Guy Laliberté, already famous by ordinary standards, will become one of the most high-profile people on the planet.

"Yet the odd thing is, for most people, he remains little more than a name--or at best an enigma. The basics of his story have been told before but there remains something baffling about his meteoric upward trajectory. Is it really as simple as that? Or is the rags-to-riches fairy-tale too good to be true?

"He was born in Quebec City 50 years ago this month to an ordinary middle-class family. He showed promise at school in the performing arts, left college at 18, and then spent a couple of years hitchhiking around Europe, supporting himself by busking. (He reportedly spent his first night on a bench in London's Hyde Park.) His specialties included accordion and, later, fire-breathing. He then returned to Canada, where, after a very brief attempt at conventional work, he joined a stilt troupe for whom he rapidly became not just a performer but also a co-organiser. He showed a talent for putting on festivals and street parties, and in 1984 Laliberté won a good contract from the government of Quebec, organizing a festival to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the province's discovery by the French. This generated a modest profit, being one of the first shows to bring the raw excitement of street performance into a circus setting; but more importantly, it generated more contracts

for the troupe, which Laliberté soon renamed Le Grand Tour du Cirque du Soleil.

"A gambler by nature, Laliberté had few qualms about signing contracts for shows in advance of securing the necessary funding for staging them. His optimism proved justified. He also had a clear and plausible vision: of a thrilling circus with neither ring nor animals. But even he felt doubts when, in 1987, he set his sights on conquering the biggest showbiz ring in the world: Hollywood.

"Hitherto, the Cirque had performed only in Canada. Now, aiming for the big time, he invested the troupe's entire savings on taking the show to Los Angeles. This was true high-stakes gambling. The troupe didn't have enough money to pay for petrol to get home. If the LA trip had flopped, they would have had to walk back to Montreal. As Laliberté later put it: 'I bet everything on that one night.' But the opening night received rave reviews, and the following day the entire city was in a frenzy to buy tickets.

"The rest is show business history. Other triumphs followed, and Laliberté, intent on maximizing revenue streams, began to dream of running multiple shows simultaneously. By the end of 1991, when Cirque was dazzling the world with its highly acclaimed Nouvelle Experience show, Laliberté had hired another cast and had one for North America and another for Europe.

"Now 25 years old, Cirque du Soleil is one of the most consistently-successful entertainment brands, and Laliberté is admired as a mogul with a Midas touch. Even the global downturn has not dented his success. In April, Laliberté told The New York Times that although attendance at his six full-time Vegas shows was down 7 per cent, Cirque's touring shows were up 7 per cent. 'We've gone through three recessions in Cirque history,' Laliberté said. 'And they were all growth periods for us.' During the height of this recession, his wealth rose from $1.7bn to $2.5bn. (He has reached number 261 on Forbes magazine's list of the richest people in the world.)

"Perhaps it is this sense of a charmed life that has made people wonder if there is more to his story than meets the eye. Can one of the world's richest men really have achieved such success with nothing more than a gift for circus tricks, a passion for success, a gambler's nerve and a few lucky breaks?

"As Laliberté's (unauthorized) biographer--and, as a result, by no means his favorite person--I can state with some confidence that, remarkably, the answer appears to be 'yes.'

"Laliberté has built his success on the understanding of human nature that he cultivated 30 years ago busking on the streets of Europe--breathing fire or playing his accordion. His business schooling was nonexistent, but street entertainment helped him understand that resilience would help him through any potholes, wrong turns and detours he encountered on the road to success. It was on the streets, wowing people with impressive performance skills, that Laliberté developed the business skills and confidence on which Cirque du Soleil's success depended.

"'What differentiates Guy Laliberté from everyone else in the entertainment business is that he understands more than anyone how important it is to treat people with respect,' a long-time employee of Cirque du Soleil said. 'His attitude is that every person is equal. And he believes hard work is the key to success. He has never tried to take any short cuts in life.' This last point is true--up to a point. Laliberté is also a gambler. A keen poker player, he has competed on the World Poker Tour and is something of a fixture on the professional circuit. He once won $696,220 in a single game. It is unlikely that he always wins--few gamblers do. But the understanding of risk that the game has given him must have helped him develop the career-defining gift of putting his money where his mouth is.

"His defining characteristic is self-belief--indispensable for a street performer or a gambler but also pretty crucial for a budding billionaire. Even in his early days, this was in evidence. 'Failure never seemed an option to him,' said Esmond Choueke, one of the first journalists to interview Laliberté. 'He is a man of vision who never sways. When I interviewed him he told me how successful in Europe circuses were without animals. He kept saying how intent he was on bringing that concept to North America. I had little doubt he would succeed because he was so passionate.'

"Others were more sceptical, as they have been at most stages in Laliberté's career. Again and again, however, he has proved the sceptics wrong. In 1991, when Cirque's dazzling Nouvelle Experience show was making it a household name, Laliberté set his heart on the unprecedented dream of making Cirque a permanent fixture on Las Vegas's hotel strip. He believed that Cirque could become as big as such legendary Vegas marquee acts as the Rat Pack and Elvis Presley.

"Powerful entertainment moguls expressed an interest in meeting this new, confident Canadian kid. But not all of them believed in him. Years later, Laliberté was still sharing his anger at J. Terrence Lanni, then president and CEO of Caesar's World, Inc, who refused outright Laliberté's proposal to present the Cirque's new show, Mystère, at Caesar's Palace. Laliberté tried to persuade Lanni, but the CEO's mind seemed elsewhere. He had already decided that Cirque was too dark and esoteric to be a match for Caesar's, and he reportedly listened with an opaque look on his face.

"It didn't take long for Laliberté to make Lanni regret his

decision. But it was passion and force of character, not luck, that enabled him to do so--and it is interesting that Laliberté and Lanni subsequently worked very fruitfully together when Lanni was at MGM Mirage.

"The fact that I am not one of Laliberté's favorite people relates not to my judgments of his achievements but to certain claims made in my biography about his personal life and some of the parties he has held. I will not repeat these claims in detail, but would assert without fear of contradiction that this is a man who knows how to party. Any international jet-setter worthy of the description recognizes that one of the most momentous dates in the social calendar is that day in early June when party-goers from around the world descend on Laliberté's Grand Prix party. For many years, Laliberté would host this bash at his sprawling mansion on the south shore of Montreal; after a while, however, he had to move the party to an airport base because of recurring complaints by neighbors about the incredible noise level. Everyone I have met who has attended one of these events has said they had never seen wild partying like it. 'I've travelled to parties in Ibiza, Hollywood and New York,' said one jet-set fashion model. 'But I have never seen anything with such detail and class as Guy's parties. He has the best DJs in the world, and the energy level is unbelievable. He's an incredible host.'

"'I never met Guy personally but what I know from people who know him is that he's the most down-to-earth person you can meet,' one neighbor told me. 'I never minded his parties. I thought they were cool, and I looked forward to them because of all the celebrities who came through. It was always exciting.'

"On one occasion, the U2 singer, Bono, showed up at the wrong address. The neighbors didn't recognize him but told him to get his car out of their drive. 'Anyone who lives near Guy has a funny story,' another neighbor said. 'There's always something going on there.'

"With so many A-list friends, Laliberté is well positioned to keep making show business breakthroughs. His biggest coup was reuniting the surviving Beatles for the 2006 Vegas show, Love. No one else had managed to get Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and Yoko Ono in the same room to consider a reunion, let alone persuading them to sign for a show. The idea had been conceived six years earlier at one of Laliberté's parties, when, around a campfire, he and George Harrison developed what would be a lasting friendship. 'I never saw Guy look so happy as that night,' said one acquaintance.

"The success of Love has led Laliberté to create another show based about a major pop icon--Elvis Presley. It opens at the Aria Resort & Casino in December. With Laliberté's track record, few people imagine it will be anything but a smash hit.

"It saddens me that Laliberté has taken issue with my biography of him, because the book was intended--like this article--as a tribute to a man I admire enormously. Like him, I began my career as a street performer. I have vivid memories of living in London in the late 1980s, playing saxophone in various Tube stations. It was Laliberté who helped me, and others like me, to realize that street performers had a chance to rise further in life. For thousands of people, Laliberté has become a symbol of sheer hope and strength. At the same time, he has never lost his emotional connection to ordinary people--the kind of people who paid to watch him on the streets. Even recently, spending many months immersed in his biographical details, I feel privileged and empowered from my contact with his life story.

"In the past few weeks, there has been no shortage of media critics of Laliberté's space mission; they suggest that, instead of spending $35m on his 12-day space trip, Laliberté would have been more effective donating the money to provide fresh water to those with no access to it. I believe he will prove such critics wrong, just as he as always confounded predictions of his failure. This is a man with a knack of accomplishing the impossible.

"'He is living proof that we can make a difference,' said Sam Hill, a street musician and admirer. 'Every street performer should familiarize with his incredible story. We've never had anyone who has offered us so much hope. It pains me when people criticize his space mission. The man is trying to raise money and access to water for everyone. How dare anyone criticize him for doing this while they're not doing a thing? I think he deserves a medal. He's risking his life to provide the unfortunate with a better life.' Laliberté has pledged a total of $100m (spread over 25 years) to One Drop, which he set up in 2007. So it's likely that he is pursuing a strategy that he believes will maximize the charity's chance of making a difference. The Moving Stars and Earth for Water event on 9 October--which also features Tatuya Ishii, Peter Gabriel, Salma Hayek, Patrick Bruel, Shakira, A R Rahman, Yann Martel and Julie Payette--will only last two hours, but it has the potential to change the way tens of millions of people think about one of the world's most precious resources. It's a gamble; but Laliberté's gambles have a habit of coming off. And if he gets a once-in-a-lifetime 12-day space adventure in the process--most of it on the International Space Station--good luck to him. No one could say he has not earned the money he is spending, and the cause of space research benefits as well.

"Meanwhile, back on Earth, Laliberté's entertainment empire continues to defy convention by combining business success with human decency. In several of the locations where Cirque is performing and where the downturn has hit hardest, Laliberté has lowered ticket prices by 20 per cent, giving a break to those who couldn't normally afford to see a Cirque show. Earlier this year, Cirque offered Florida residents a discount for its category two seats at its La Nouba show--$64 per person instead of $84. Unlike most other large companies, which have been laying off staff, Laliberté's Cirque du Soleil has been intent on protecting its 4,200 employees worldwide.

"'We are not dupes, naïve, or innocents,' Daniel Lamarre, Laliberté's COO at Cirque, said. 'Protecting the livelihood of the thousands of families that contribute ceaselessly to our success is one of our surest values.'

"'Guy has had no shortage of critics,' said another acquaintance. 'But time and again he proves them wrong. People have always tried to bring him down, just like some are during his space mission. I guarantee you Guy will make history in space and only positive things will come out of it. That's how he operates, always defying the odds."

Norman Latourelle, a former Cirque du Soleil executive, produced Cavalia, an equestrian horse show, which came to

The Cavalia midway with reception tent at left and big top on right. Richard J. Reynolds III photo.

the United States in 2009 and quickly became a favorite with the Soleil silk-stocking crowd, used to paying $55 to $75 a ticket. The multimedia show lasted two-hours.

The performance was presented in a 100-foot big top with theater-style seating on one side of a 160 foot-wide stage. The show had 150 employees, 64 horses, 35 performers and traveled on 100 trucks. Twelve days were required to erect the entire show.

Cavalia first appeared on the West Coast and then later made cross-country tours. In February it was in Scottsdale, Arizona. It moved east to the Midwest and eastern part of the U.S. It played Chicago and Washington D.C., before going to Atlanta on October 27. Business was so strong that the outfit stayed until January 3, 2010.

Richard Reynolds saw the show on October 29. He reported: "I found the show to be very good. They had a huge concession tent with the likes of a small box of popcorn costing an arm and a leg. There were tables all around at which to sit and drink and eat. They were doing a big concession business.

"The show uses some 60 horses from 12 breeds. The performance consisted of dressage, bareback and Roman riding and liberty acts, in some of which the horses are in the arena without any trainer. For some a circus ring is formed.

"There are also acrobatic numbers, including one of those Russian barre things—where two guys hold a flexible pole on which another vaults into the air and does somersaults and lands back on the pole.

"I had the strange feeling that I was seeing a recreation of John Bill Ricketts' first circus performance in 1793. . . .

"As for staging, it is breathtaking. The arena is 160 feet wide on two levels. The back curtain or screen is 210 feet wide; it displays subtle, ever changing scenes and special effects to suit the mood of each act. There is even rain and snow. The live music fit the show perfectly.

"There are eight tents. The big top is immense. It spans over 24,000 square feet. There are 2,004 seats, all of them padded and quite comfortable. Upon entering one must climb to the top of the grandstand and work down to the seat rows. It's a good climb. I'd say that the top row is some 25 to 30 feet off the ground. Steel scaffolding provides the underpinning. All the seats are on one side. The performance is in front of all the seats.

"All of the semi-trailers have a striking paint job. A big sign faced onto Atlanta's downtown connector which brings the combined I-75 ND I-85 right through the heart of downtown."

Following the completion of her contract with Feld Entertainment Sylvia Zerbini signed a long term contract with Cavalia as a horse trainer as well as working 16 horses in the performance.

The Big Apple Circus, following a less than stellar 2008 season, reduced the non-performing staff to cut expenses. Don Covington, well known to fans, was among those receiving pink slips. The 2009 show was titled Play On. Paul Binder was artistic director and Steve Smith was director. Guillaume Dufresnoy was vice-president and general manager.

The program of displays was: Welcome, Paul Binder; Music Everwhere, the company; Do You Like Good Music?, Carrie Harvey; Uplifting Composition, Regina Dobrovitsaya; Horn Selection, Grandma and Mark Gindick; Double Time, Juggling Time, the LaSalle Brothers; Lead A Band, Glen Heroy; One-String Cadenza, Glen Heroy; One-String Cadenza, Sarah Schwarz; Lip Service, Grandma and Mark

The Cavalia lot and semi. Richard J. Reynolds III photo.

The Big Apple Circus lot in 2009.

Gindick; Sounds of Silence, Les Freres Taquin; Urning a Living, Guimig Meng; Woofer & Tweeter, Christine Zerbini; A Gallop, Christine Zerbini and Sultan Kumisbayev; Adagio, the Nanjing Duo; Syncopated Canines, Luciano Anastasini; Play it Again, Sam, Mark Gindick; Purely Classical, the Rodion Troupe; High Notes, the Flying Cortes.

The show opened its summer tour in Atlanta, February 13-March 7.

The UniverSoul Circus had two warm-up stands in Greenville, South Carolina, February 6-7; and Savannah, Georgia, February 12-15 before its usual big Atlanta stand, February 18-22. The 75 performers included the Trinity 3, foot jugglers from Ethiopia and China; Wandi and Sifiso, comedy magic; Twisted Soul, contortionists; Jorge Barreda's elephants; Cossack Rough Riders from Gabon; Chinese Olympic Acrobats, risley act; China Soul, high wire and motorcycle globe.

The UniverSoul Circus in 2009.

Circus Sarasota opened on January 29 and played until February 22. The show was titled "Bello Comes Home." Joseph Bauer, Jr. was ringmaster. The acts were Caroline Williams, three different horse acts; clown Chuck Sidlow; Semeon Krachinov, juggler; Bello Nock, cube, trampoline act, bungee and space wheel; Wang Hong, foot juggling; Dolly Jacobs and Yuri Rijkov Reis, Wings of Love aerial act; David Rosaire, dog act; Alexey Golobordko, contortionist and Vladimir and Olga Smirnov, quick change act.

The show played Ft. Myers, March 6-29.

This review of Circus Flora by Chris Gibson was published on June 12, 2009: "Although I've seen plenty of circus movies and acts over the years, I'd never actually sat under a big top and enjoyed one up close and personal. A chance to gather up the family and check out the wonders of St. Louis's own Circus Flora, provided me just such an opportunity. Their French-infused concoction, Medrano, provided my son and I with our first experiences witnessing the magic that this one ring circus conjures up each summer in our own backyard. To quote John Lennon, who was himself referencing an old circus handbill he'd found in a junk shop: "A splendid time is guaranteed for all."

"There's a narrative that runs through this production that references the Montmarte circus of the late 19th century. It all takes on a decidedly Parisian flavor with various romantic intrigues involving a lady in red, and the peculiar running thread contributed by Yo-Yo the Narrator. None of this really matters, except that it sets the mood and tone of the show. The real attraction here are the acts, not the atmosphere, and the performers provide a wide range of athletic daredevilry, all of which is thoroughly engaging.

"Terry Crane's amazing work on an aerial rope set the bar high, as he repeatedly pulled his way toward the ceiling, carefully winding the rope around his body at the peak, before letting it unravel with balletic grace as he tumbled downward. Alesya Gulevich displayed her charms with a hula hoop demonstration that demanded immense concentration on her part. I lost count of how many ended up on her lithe frame by the end. As a first act finale, you can't beat The Flying Wallendas, an act that's been thrilling audiences with their high wire shenanigans for nearly a hundred years.

"Horse riding was also on the bill, and a number of variations on the equestrian arts were featured. Sasha Nevidonski performed an aerial ballet with his horse Mammut that was as impressive visually as it was physically. The Ianna Spirit Riders segment gave a group of young girls the chance to show off their skills at balancing on top of these thundering beasts, while Omar Chinibekov and The Riders of the Ring displayed the intensity that's required to perform their own particular brand of trick riding.

"The St. Louis Arches delivered a cheerfully peppy series of acrobatic stunts that delighted the youngsters in attendance. But, it was Johnny Peers' Muttville Comix, a motley collection of the most adorable trained dogs you've ever seen, that really got the crowd roaring. And, I'd be remiss in my duties if I didn't mention Nino the clown and his playfully silly antics. The Flying Pages closed the action with a trapeze act that managed to generate plenty of "oohs" and "ahs," as the members flew through the air with controlled abandon.

"What impressed me the most was the level of trust that's needed to insure that the performers are working in a safe environment? When you're standing on top of a horse who's

Cole Bros. Circus in Randolph, New Jersey in 2009. Paul Gutheil photo.

running at a full gallop, one slip could leave you paralyzed. And, when you're leaping in the air from one trapeze to the next, you have to hope the net was put up properly. So, this is an operation that really relies on everyone doing their job, and it's a credit to them all that it comes off so smoothly."

John Pugh's Cole Bros. Circus of the Stars opened in Deland, Florida, March 21-22. The performance included the Toprasta Troupe, high wire; elephants; motorcycle globe; dog and pony review; silks; jugglers, acrobats; space wheel and human cannonball.

Ken Kawata visited the show on July 25 when it played Staten Island and reported: "Before and after the show we went to the clean back area, watched the three (Miller) ele-

phants, Viola, Nina and Libby, all female Asians and chatted with the elephant man Louie Del Moral, a friendly guy.

"The two-hour matinee (including intermission) was enjoyable under the big top, performed in a one-ring format. I would liked to have seen big cats and aerial trapeze act, but the show had all other standard acts. Three motorcycles in the globe, dogs and pony, revolving wheel, educated mule, silk production, seven men on high-wire, jugglers, rola bola and hand balance, hair hang duo, liberty camel act (four dromedaries), elephants, human cannonball in addition to clowns."

Raising the new European style Carson & Barnes big top in Oxnard, California in May. Jerry Cash photo.

The Carson & Barnes Circus opened in Grapevine, Texas, March 20-22 where the new red and white European four-mast big top went up for the first time. Some new trucks were added to carry the canvas.

The performance at the opening included: opening spec; Silks by Ana; dog act; space wheel; balancing act; clown Alex Acero; trampoline; spec; four girls on webs; Cavallini flying act; pony drill, hula hoops; Kevin Rios, contortion act; Chip Arthur with three elephants.

Showbiz David commented on the show: "A Note: Last year I stated on this blog that were I to review any circuses in '09 that I had seen in '08 and given less than three stars to, unless my '09 rating would be higher by at least ½ star, I would not review. Sorry to say, I have seen Carson & Barnes and I can't give it a higher mark than I gave it in '08. So, since I have received interesting feedback on the show from two different sources, I am posting them. The first came in an e-mail. . . .

"From Dave Wolowic, Oxnard, California: 'This last Monday, my wife and I drove out to Oxnard to see the last show of Carson & Barnes. There was a lot to like about the circus. And some not to like. We loved the aerial acts. The two woman who do the first act are amazing and use no safety lines. It was very thrilling. The trapeze act was great. Much better than what we saw at Circus Vargas. Of course the sound system was a bit lacking and I could not understand the names of the performer. The lead flyer did an amazing dismount by swinging so high he grabbed onto the roof of the tent, and then dropped to the net. So much fun. I know your disdain for hula hoop acts, but I thought this one was really well done.'

Barbara Byrd, owner of the Carson & Barnes Circus.

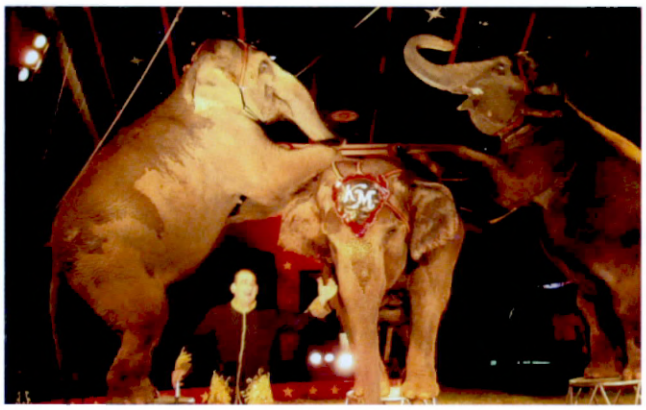
"'The costumes throughout the show were clean and new. The clowns were OK. Alex, the world-renowned King of Comedy had a very funny trampoline act, but it could have used a little more time for him on the tramp and less shtick around it. Although we had seen the elephants before the show and at intermission, it was really impressive when the came running into the tent for their act. My biggest disappointment was the dog act. As an act, it was mediocre. But what made it worse was the dogs looked so dirty and mangy and in need of a good meal. It really took away from the act. I wrote Carson & Barnes and told them if I were a PETA person I would come after them for the dogs and not the elephants. The other odd thing which happened was during the trapeze act, they started undoing the tent from the center poles! Suddenly I see some guys head sticking out through the roof! Bad show. I realize it was the last show of the run, but they could have at least waited until the trapeze act was over, when everyone wasn't looking at the roof of the tent. We also thought that the performers weren't very enthusiastic when they had to partake in the circus parades.'

"'We had a fun time but I think Circus Vargas had a better "look." It seemed that everyone on the midway and ushers all had some kind of uniform. Carson & Barnes was a little more ragged around the edges. Still the show had between 500 to 600 people, and I think most of them left having had a good time.'"

Circus Vargas introduced a new Royal Blue and yellow big top in Canoga Park, California on August 27. When the show played Canoga Park on December 9 it released this information: "Circus Vargas wants you to cash in your pink slip. This holiday season just got a little bit cheaper thanks to Circus Vargas. The California circus company, which is performing in Canoga Park through December 14, said it is offering free tickets to people who are unemployed.

Circus Vargas in Torrance, California in November. Jerry Cash photo.

Individuals can bring proof of unemployment—such as a layoff notice or unemployment check stubs—to the box office to receive as many as four free tickets for a same-day show. Tickets are valued at $20 for adults and $15 for children. The production includes some new elements, including a trapeze act, a new clown segment as well as a balancing act involving cylinders."



Armando Loyal and the Kelly-Miller elephants. Harry L. Kingston photo.

The Kelly Miller Circus traveled 10,395 miles through 13 states and appeared in 219 towns over a span of 257 days. Breaking with tradition, the show opened in Brownsville, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley. As the show headed north it soon encountered rain and it seemed that for the rest of the season, rarely a week went by when it didn't rain on the show. Kelly Miller played its winter quarters town, Hugo Oklahoma on a cold wet March 28th. Weather conditions made the lot unsuitable, so the show had to change to a tight lot, but one more solid.

Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade was resurrected in 2009, and Festival organizers turned to Kelly Miler to provide the Festival Circus. As the show was on the East coast at the time of the parade, a 2nd unit was assembled. Weather was perfect for this 2nd unit and it enjoyed excellent business with every performance but two sold out. The performance was presented in a leased European big top.

Kelly Miller owner, John Ringling North II, was the parade's Grand Marshal and he and his wife Shirley rode in his great uncle Al Ringling's carriage.

While the show was on the road, the home office team moved into new offices in the winter quarters complex.

As in the past, the show played two days on Kelley's Island in Lake Erie. This required transporting the entire show by ferries.

Kelly Miller had the distinction of being the only show on the road to have 3 different daily blogs.

After a season of difficult weather, but good business, the show closed in Ft. Smith Arkansas, and it rained during teardown.

The performance included John Kennedy Kane as ringmaster; Campas, rolling globes; clown Papa Anastasini; Marilyn, lyra-chiffon. The Fabulous Darnell's, magic; Princess Whitewater, ladder balancing; the Poema Family, risley act and Tim Frisco with three Miller elephants.

Circus Vidbel opened on May 19 in Narberth, Pennsylvania.

Circus Vidbel in Vernon, New Jersey. Paul Guthei photo.

On September 24 the show was in North Haledon, New Jersey. The performance included Susan Vidbel, neck swing and cloud swing; Oleans Deshko, hula hoops and cube; Joel, lyra; Jennifer Walker, pony and dogs; clown Olex Kartukov; Pat Davidson, juggling rola bola and risley; Heidi Herriot, big and little horse; Ashton Duo; and Jennifer Vidbel Ashton, cloud swing.

Ariana Alvarez, hula hoops. clown Poppy; Alvarez Duo, juggling; Carlos Svenson, trick horse an goats; Petar Avamov, human slinky; Alvarez family, tetterboard; Petar Avramov, riding mechanic.

Walker Bros. Circus played an indoor route through June. In Springfield, Ohio. Dallas Rosaire Zoppe was ringmaster and presented a dog act. The performance included Paolo Carballo, juggler; Rebecca Ostroff, single trap and silks; Scott's unrideable mule; Juliette Carballo, contortion and hand balancing; clown Lucho; Desiree, liberty horses and Delila Zerbini, foot juggling.

Walker Bros. Circus in June 2009. Steve Keller photo.

The under canvas tour opened in Brunswick, New Jersey on July 6. The performance included Dallas Rosaire-Zoppe, dog act; Kelsie Delmonte, web Delilah Zerbini, foot juggling; Desire Frite, pony drill; clown Lucho; Paolo Carballo. Juggling; Mike and Delilah Donoho, unrideable mule and Juliette Carballo, contortion.

The show played Maine, New Hampshire and Connecticut. Making a long jump the show was in Clarksville, Georgia on July 26. The show moved on a tractor-trailer that carried the big top, poles and Bobcat. A straight truck carried the concession trailer. A smaller truck pulled a seat wagon.

The Alain Zerbini Circus played Mt. Holly Springs, Pennsylvania on June 2. The performance included Julian Zerbini, trampoline; Carmen Rosales, single trapeze; clowns Larry Rojas and Hugo Rios; Alaine Zerbini, dogs and performing buffalo; the Crazy Sailors, trampoline; Rosales family, perch pole; Julian Zerbini, two camels and three ponies; Ossi Sanchez, juggling; Carmon Rosales, hula hoops

The Alain Zerbini Circus at Mt. Dora, Florida in May. Dick Mitchell photo.

and Gustavo Ramirez, space wheel.

The Culpepper & Merriweather Circus played Hugo, Minnesota. July 25. James B. Herbert was announcer. The performance included show owner Trey Key working a male lion and two young tigers; Simone Dykes. single trap; April Dykes, juggling and rope jumping; clown Jessica Hoffschild; Tepox Duo, quick change; Paulina Dykes, bird act; and the Mitrovich Duo, high wire act. The show was at Hampshire, Illinois on August 25.

Trey Key's cat act on Culpepper.

Davenport's Big Top Family Fun Circus played indoors in Liberal, Kansas, March 14-15. It was in Iowa on June 1. The show had played one day stands in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska earlier in the season. Alfredo Morales was canvas boss. Brian LaPalme was ringmaster.

The Davenport children presented a number of acts. Jario worked cube act, liberty horses and a Russian swing act; Kenya presented aerial silks; Zaira did an aerial lyra; and Johnny did the clowning. The Perez family presented a Russian swing act, juggling and hula hoops.

Two bounce rides, pony rides, a petting zoo and a ticket and concession trailer were on the midway. On July 13 the show took a day off in Peru, Indiana at the Circus Hall of Fame.

The Davenport show played Mondovi, Wisconsin on September 5. The town was well billed. The performance there included a juggler, cradle, clown, aerial lyra, three percheron liberty act, hula hoops, Spanish web, magic inclined wire motorcycle, and Russian swing. Brian LaPalme's fire eating act closed the show.

On November 4 a Doug Terranova elephant escaped from the Davenport show and collided with an SUV on a rural highway in Enid, Oklahoma.

No information has been found about Gopher Davenport in 2009. No one reported seeing his show.

Tony Liebling's rola-bola act. Jim Cole photo.

The Espanas' Cirquesa-Dreamquest opened in Venice, Florida in January. The acts included Benito Aquilar, juggling; Alfonso Cuvillos, rola bola; Viven Espana, single traps; Alexandra Fidosseyeva, hand balancing; Asia Espana, cloud swing; Noe and Ivan Espana, space wheel; Jose Pasaran and Polo Baez, cross bow; Vivien and Asia Espana, chiffons; Noemi, Elan and Zore Espana, acrobatics; teeterboard act; hula hoops and Benito and Dulce, quick change act.

Tommi Liebel's circus opened at the Oscacia Free Market in St. Cloud, Florida in January for two weekends. At a later date in Ocala, Florida the show made the news when one of the monkeys got loose. A month later it was captured,

Liebling Bros. Circus had a blow down on June 12, 2009 in South Carolina. The tent was severely damaged by a wind storm.

Bob Childress.

Bob Childress' Lewis & Clark Circus opened a spring tour on March 18. Bill Brickle was again ringmaster and worked a dog act. Louis Passo worked a table act and a space wheel; the Martine Duo presented cubes and cylinders; Farmer Brown's goats; the Ayala family worked a perch act and musical clown routine and rola bola; Mara Ayala, big and little horse and camels; Oriana Ayala, aerial web and hula hoops; El Manuel, silk act;

Oscarians, juggling. Bob Childress worked three tigers on the midway, By July 16 the show was in Monroeville, Pennsylvania.

Circus Pages opened the season on January 17 at Port Charlotte. Florida. The performance included Colleen and George Pages with two white lions, four white tigers and two male lions; ringmaster James Earhart, dog act; Freida Pages and Kayla, camels; clown Juan Toscano; Jorgie, Jr. and Colleen dressage horses; Ibarra Duo, juggling; Ignacio and Johathan Ibarra , trampoline; Earhart family, motorcycle globe; Sandra Omar, aerial lyre and the Pages elephants.

Tuffy Nicholas' International All Star Circus, formerly

Stars of the Moscow Circus, opened in Soldotna, Alaska on March 18, then played Anchorage, March 20-22; Juneau, March 23-24 and Fairbanks, March 28-29. The performers were the Arestov family doing rope jumping, single trapeze, single rolling wheel and quick change; John Winn, motorcycle on wire; Amanda Bautista, contortion; clown Alez Kartulov and Rick Wallenda, high wire.

Nicholas closed his Cirque Hawaii in Honolulu after the lease ran out with the theater. The Nicholas Cirque Polynesia opened on May 28 in Maui at the Hyatt Regency. Doug Harris was managing partner of the show, presented in the hotel ballroom. The performance was basically the same as Cirque Hawaii.

Tuffy Nicholas.

Nicholas was back in Honolulu presenting a show titled the Great American Circus, opening on November 14. The show was in the Blaisdell Arena.

Sasha Vosk's Moscow Circus's performance was titled A Russian Folk Fair. The show included Vladimir and Irina Plugatar, musical bells; Sergey Toropov, hand balancing; Mykaylo Pavlov and Nataliya Piontek, acrobatic duo; Pavel Yeusiukevich, juggling; Kristina Buynyakovs, hula hoops; Pavel Kolybin and Konstantin Zimin, vaulting acrobats; clowns Vladimir and Irina Plugatar; Mykhaylo Pavlov and Nataliya Piontek, trapeze; Andrey Loshkin, dog act and Liubov Klimova, juggling. These performers were the real Russian McCoys, just look at their names. In 2009 this show played theaters.

Yakov's Moscow Circus played Branson, Missouri in 2009. The performance included clown Andre; flying star Marina; Irina Markova's dogs; Pavlina Gymisheva, human slinky; Anthony Soumiatin, unicycle and Igor and Dennis, strongmen and Mishka's Russian bears.

Loomis Bros. Circus played a fall tour of Florida. The show played St. Augustine, November 18-19. The program included elephants, tigers, clowns, and aerialists.

Russell Bros. Circus played various fairs in California. The acts included Edward Russell, birds and beasts, Stephen Michaels chair stacking and juggling and Yohodie with cat and two doves.

The Artania program,

The U.S. debut of Artania (www.artania.net), which kicked off a limited engagement at Sam Houston Race Park in Houston on March 14, extended the run due to the show's popularity through Sunday, May 10. The show was originally scheduled to close on Sunday, April 12, but producers decided to provide additional performances in order to accommodate the demand for tickets.

The family-oriented cirque-style show featured the legendary Kantimerov Family Cossack warriors, in breath-taking horsemanship and acrobatic artistry with twelve of the rarest Russian horses, including an extraordinary white albino and a horse with a bloodline dating back to Alexander the Great.

The show had a cast of 55 artists, musicians and acrobats all under a large custom built air-controlled tent. Artania, by definition, is a mysterious kingdom frequently mentioned in the chronicles and legends of ancient Russia, where mysteries of the past engage with the innovations of the future. Its press propaganda continued: "Above all, it is a celebration of life and of mankind's love and admiration for horses, illustrating the harmony between man and nature. While the horses move in a perfectly timed dressage, the infinitely creative mix of artistry, acrobatics and dance will astonish and spark the imagination. The artists not only defy the laws of gravity, they transcend laws of nature as they unveil the secret wisdom of the future and of times past.

The Artania big top.

"The show incorporates a variety of performance styles, from death-defying horseback riding stunts, aerial acrobats and contortionists to traditional segments requiring audience participation, all of which will amaze and excite viewers of all ages. 'This is the greatest show on dirt,' said Mairbek Kantimerov."

Since 1994, the creative and artistic direction of Artania has fallen into the hands of Mairbek Kantimerov, a third-generation family member. In 1997, Mairbek was recognized as an Honored Artist of Russia and North Ossetia. He created his own theatrical attraction centered around the legends of ancient warriors, the Scythians, and it quickly became an incredibly successful production in Russia and Europe. Mairbek performed several horse shows and received the Russian National Academy Award as well as Attraction of the Year Award in Ontario, Canada. In addition, Mairbek was named the winner of the 20th International Circus Festival in Rome.

Many ancient and rare breeds of horses were featured in Artania, including: Akhal-Teke Thoroughbred, Tersk, Ukrainian and Orloff Trotter. The Akhal-Teke is the most ancient and one of the rarest breeds in the world. One of the Akhal-Tekes featured in Artania was a very unusual, cream-albino with blue eyes and bloodline dating back 2400 years to the time of Alexander the Great. Born in the Asian

"Significant marketing partners have joined forces with Cirque Berzerk this year to help promote the show through various media and marketing programs. Partners to date include: Clear Channel, American Express, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) and Flaunt magazine."

Canada's Garden Bros. Circus for the first time in 75 years presented an animal free show. Ian Garden, Jr. said five cities on their route prohibited animal performances.

The Hamid Circus produced the Springfield, Massachusetts Shrine in the Eastern States Coliseum, April 30 to May 3. John Kane was ringmaster. The strong performance included the Flying Pages; Bello Nock's space wheel; the Hawthorn tigers presented by Judit and Jergen Nerger; the Darnell's magic act and dogs; David Connors, the Campas and the McIntyres on unicycles and rolling globes; Mercedes Pages, pony review; Princess White Feather and Dandino, rola bola and balancing ladders; Davenport's elephants.

George Carden's Circus International produced the Minneapolis Shrine Circus, October 16-18. The performance included Bruno Blaszak's tigers; the Marinof Duo, double traps; Larry Carden with elephant Bo and later with four elephants; Raul Rodriguez, liberty ponies; the Dragomir Troupe, teeterboard; the Espanas, motorcycle on wire and space wheel; Lloyd's sheep dogs and David Smith, Sr., cannon act.

James Plunkett's Christy-Cole Circus produced the Norfolk, Nebraska, Shrine show. The performance included a pony act; Cristian Bilea and his mother, quick change act; Terry Frisco's elephant; Ammed Garcia and brother. clowns. Plunkett produced the Willmar, Minnesota, Shrine, September 25-26. The performance included Brian Franzen's wild animals; Clown Willie Valencia, juggling; the Dandinos, table acrobatics; the Viorels, quick change act and hula hoops and Chelsey and Elayna, aerial hoop.

The Les Kimes, Jr. Circus Royal produced the Osman Temple Shrine Circus in the Minnesota State Fair Coliseum in St. Paul April 2-5. The performance included the Flying Tuniziaianis; three rings of hula hoops; clowns Greg and Karen DeSanto; T. J. Howell, unicycles; the Viorels, Russian bar; Kimes' Pork Chop Review; Nathan Valencia, dressage horse; Cyber, motorcycle globe; Carlos Quinones, working a Doug Terranova wild animal act; Valencia brothers, aerial silks; Doug Terranova with two African elephants; and the Dave Smith cannon act.

Cindy Migley's Circus played Grand Forks, North Dakota, April 24-26.Tim Tegge was ringmaster. The acts included Hans and Natalia Winn, sway poles and space wheel; Brian Franzen's tigers; Shane Johnson, comedy car; Derrick Rosaire's bears; Gabriella Zerbini, single trapeze; Karima Duo, quick change an magic; Sauol Mal Maltese, chair balancing; Tim Tegge, plate spinning; the Poema family, risley act; the Flying Maltese and the Franzen elephants.

The Jose Cole Circus played Elk River, Minnesota on May 11 near the end of its season. Jeff Cole was ringmaster and the acts included Elmo Gibbs, dogs; Miss Maria Rodriquez, aerial silks; Paolo, chair balancing; the Joan Troupe, perch pole; Tom Demry, elephant; Selene, aerial lyra; and Joan Jimenez, rola bola.

The American Crown/Circo Osorio played Las Vegas March 7 and 8. The performance was presented in red and yellow big top. The program included chiffons; rola bola; clowns; Mini horse; hand balancing; high wire; Veronica, aerial lyre; trick cycling and motorcycle globe.

Circo Hermanos Caballero played Las Vegas starting on March 8. The big top seated 2,000 in plastic chairs. A menagerie tent was on the midway, holding camels, ponies and zebras. Ruben Caballero, Jr., was ringmaster. The acts included trampoline; clown; donkey act; three camels; the Isabet Duo, double traps and straps; Rubin, Marco and Luis Caballero, motorcycle globe; Clauda Alvarado, chiffon; Oscar Portugal, juggler; and the Flying Caballeros.

Circo Hermanos Vazquez played the Los Angeles area in May. The large European fuchsia and blue big top made a big flash. It was surrounded by smaller tents enclosed by an attractive fence. The overall lot looked much like a typical European circus.

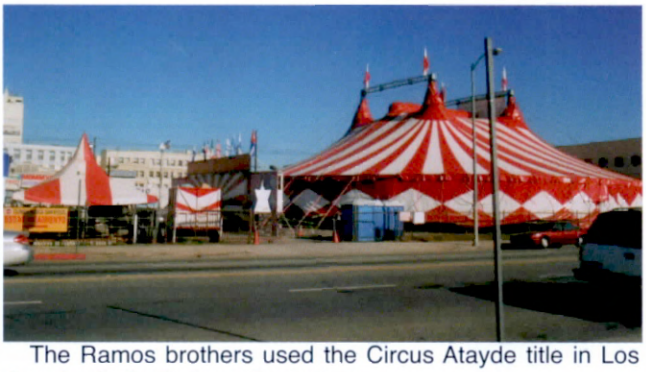
Circo Hermanos Vazquez in Columbus, Ohio in September. Fred Pfening photo.

The acts included Yermo Vazquez. casting act; clown Vladimer Yeremenco; five girl dancers; Jose Alberto Vazquez, juggler; Pastelito, musical clown; the Olate Family, dogs; Klaus Dieter with two horses, two camels, one zebra and a pony; Aldo Vasquez, tigers; Ekaterina, single traps; the Los Kambarov Korzk, Cossacks riders; and the George Hanneford elephants.

Moving into Texas the show played Dallas, Austin and Houston in June and July, each stand being about ten days. Vasquez played Miami, August 14-23; and Atlanta, August 28 to September 14. The show played Columbus, Ohio on the way to Chicago. It played Indianapolis, September 18-21 and Chicago, September 25 to October 19. Their annual stand in Flushing, New York was played in December.

The Ramos brothers one ring show was titled Circus Atayde when it played Los Angeles in March and April. In prior years the show was titled Sky Circus and Circo de Nacional de Mexico. The acts included the Richards brothers, juggling; clown Kiwi; Figueva, dogs; Jessica, Derry and Dianna, rolling globes; Amauri Ramos, juggling; Alex Ramos, Clydesdale horse; Eichardo, David and Mark, living statues; Eduardo Ramos and Robberto Figueva, motorcycle globe; Duo Vitale, cross-bow and knife throwing gag; elephant walk-a-round and the Flying Rodogels.

Using the Ramos Bros. title it played Fairfield, California, November 15. At that time the acts included the Gatti elephants presented by John Pelton.



The Ramos brothers used the Circus Atayde title in Los Angeles in April. Jerry Cash photo.

The Esqueda Family's Circus Extravaganza played Sarasota in Robarts Arena in September. The acts included Jordan, rola bola; Miley, balancing act; the Poema family, risley, plate spinning and a dog act; Esqueda riders, motorcycle globe and the Gauchos.

The Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, Indiana presented performances, July 11-24. John Fugate was ringmaster and the acts were Martin Alvarez family, vaulting, aerial lyre; Janet Smith, horse and carriage; clown Pat Kelly; and Doug Terranova's elephants.

Doug Terranova's elephants at the Circus Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame appeared for the fifth year at the Indiana State Fair. John Fugate was ringmaster. The acts included the Martin Alvarez family, teeterboard and juggling; Stephanie and Orlando, riding Percherons; Nurboul Meirmanov, hand balancing; Paul Lopez, unsupported ladders; Sarah Blum and Will Howard, adagio act and Doug Terranova's elephants.

The Bindlestiff Family Cirkus in collaboration with the University of Arizona School of Dance created the New Vaudeville Review, a program that can be adapted to work with other university theater, dance and music departments. The show headlined the 2009 Madfest (Madison, Wisconsin Juggling Festival). In March the Bindlestiff Stage Variety Show opened at Galapagos Art Space in Brooklyn, New York. On October 3, Bindlestiff presented Night Circus as part of the Grand Opening of the Walkway over the Hudson. Over 50 circus artists took part in the spectacle. The show returned to Time & Space Limited (Hudson, New York) to offer the Summer Cirkus Camp. The Bindlestiffs presented full stage productions at Columbia Greene Community College (Hudson, New York); Johnston State

The Amazing Grace Circus big top. Paul Gutheil photo.

College (Johnston, Vermont) and University of Arizona School of Dance (Tucson, Arizona).

In 2009 Bindlestiff Family Cirkus presented 121 shows to 55,400 audience members.

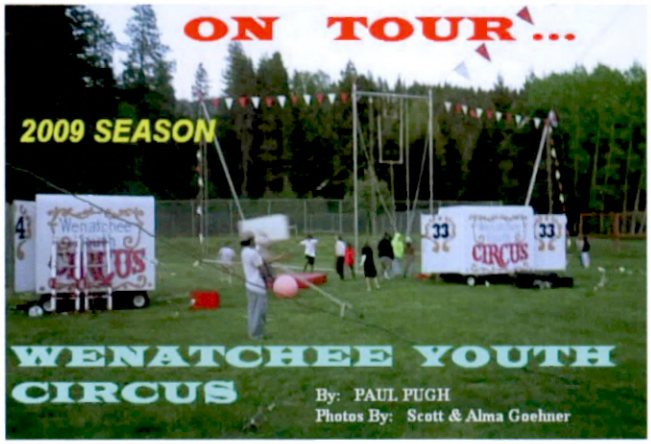
Youth circuses continued to train children in the circus arts. The Amazing Grace Circus, an off shoot of the Amazing Grace Church in Nyack, New York, appeared in their own big top. The year round group was directed by Carlo Pellegrini, who had performed on the Big Apple Circus. Pellegrini taught clowning, acrobatics, juggling, rolling globe, tight wire and tumbling.

The 2009 Circus Smirkus theme used folk and fairy tales like "The Big Bad Wolf" and the "Tortoise and the Hare." The show took their big top to sixteen cities. Almost half of the performers were new to the performance. Most of them trained at the Cirkus Smirkus Summer Camp.

Artistic director Troy Wunderle appeared throughout the show.

The 2009 Circus Juventas show was titled The Jade Dragon. It was based on the popular tale of Mulan, featuring a Chinese girl who defied tradition by pretending to be a boy to save China from the Hun warriors. The show blended martial arts and multiple aspects of Chinese culture with traditional circus arts, creating a unique experience.

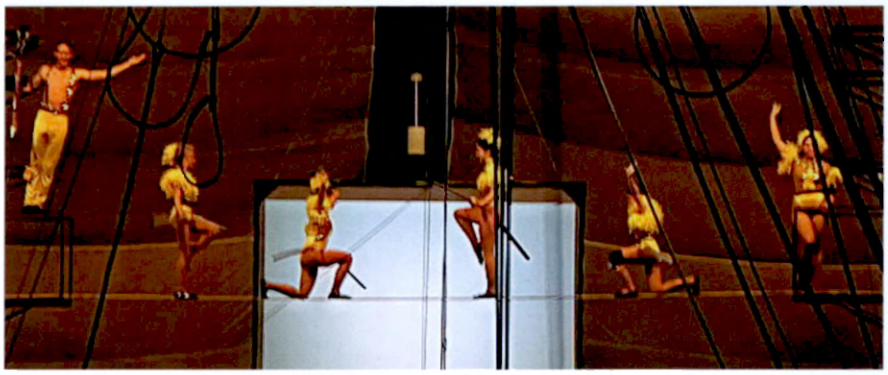
On August 16 a section of bleacher seats collapsed in St. Paul. Seven spectators were sent to the hospital. The incident happened at the last of the circus' series of summer program performances.



The Wenatchee Youth Circus was on the road only 31 days in 2009 for the 57th edition. Director Paul Pugh made these comments about memorable moments: "Emily Pratt, an outstanding high wire performer added the art of Fire Eating to her repertoire of circus skills. Billy Tuthill kept working

towards the double back flip on the flying trapeze to add to the forward up and over, the single back flip, as well as continuing his daring high wire antics and inclined cable walking sans balancing pole. Nathan McCort accomplished the triple back somersault on the teeterboard, while Kana West fit nicely into the role of the flying act catcher."

The performance also included swinging ladders, juggling, double trapeze, flying trapeze, trampoline, Spanish web, clowning and Roman ladders.



The high wire act on the PAL Sailor Circus. Jim Cole photo.

Sarasota's PAL Sailor Circus Holiday Spectacular was presented December 27-29, 2009. Ashlee Bales and Mackinzie Deets were announcers. The acts included Roman ladders, stilt walkers, triple trapeze, flying trapeze, rolling globes, hand balancing, unicycles, Roman rings, teeterboard, low wire, Spanish web, and juggling.

The Circus World Museum opened its 50th anniversary season on May 16. The circus performance featured some stupendous artists, including the Laurino family who presented three top shelf acts. Roberto, Mirna and Erika, who appear as Los Antons, presented a perch act with spinning hair hang finale. Mirna also performed on a swinging Spanish Web and sons Max and Emmanuel performed a dynamic Risley act. During the summer, Max also premiered his new Rola Bola Act. Both Emmanuel and Max assisted with the "Ring of Illusions" magic show.

Brian and Irene Franzen presented the three Franzen Elephants in the circus ring. In a separate tented venue, Brian also presented an educational "Tiger Adventure." Brian and Irene also operated elephant and pony rides, while Irene assisted with "Ring of Illusions."

Duo Fusion was Giovanni Perez and Virginia Tuells, and they presented their jaw-dropping hand balancing act every day throughout the summer. For their second turn, they switched between Giovanni's musical acrobatic act and Virginia's Arabian-themed contortion act.

Roger, a.k.a. Neil Skoy, was the clown, returning for his second year with Circus World after being on Ringling-Barnum. He presented two turns in the circus performance, with Laura Otremba assisting him on the Gorilla routine. Neil also presented a wonderful "Clown Make-up Demonstration," worked the face painting booth, and appeared throughout the "Ring of Illusions" magic show. Laura Otremba was a first of May, who made herself generally useful. In addition to helping Skoy with one of his gags, she sang in the opening and finale of the circus, appeared in both magic shows and presented KidsWorld Circus.

Larry Stout was Musical Director and played keyboards; with Tristan Crist as percussionist. Crist also programmed all of the sound and lighting systems throughout Circus World and kept them operating through the season. Crist's primary talent was producing two distinctly different magic shows. "Ring of Illusions," a large-scale magic show staged in the circus ring and "Illusions of Reality," a more intimate performance staged in The Irvin Feld Theatre. He also assisted throughout 2009 in producing the Great Circus Parade.

Dave SaLoutos began and finished the season as Ringmaster, being Director of the Great Circus Parade, had to turn the season over to "first of May" Robert Trader. Robert also assisted with KidsWorld Circus and appeared in the "Ring of Illusions" magic show.

The season also featured a Clown Make-Up Demonstration, a Guided Wagon Tour and the theatre playing "Gunther Gabel Williams; the Man and the Legend," "The World's Greatest Showmen," and "The Great Circus Train . The season closed on August 30.

On July 1 a group of wagons that traveled from Baraboo to Milwaukee for the Great Circus Parade made a short stop in Madison from 11:00 a. m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Great Circus Parade was presented on July 12. The Milwaukee Lakefront show grounds was open from July 8 to 11. Besides the Kelly-Miller Circus, the midway also contained a petting zoo, food vendors, antique band organs, animal rides, circus wagon displays, a kiddie circus train ride and hundreds of horses.

The Circus of Chefs was held on September 3 in the Deppe Wagon Pavilion. Some of the area's most talented chefs, vintners and brew masters provided appetizers, entrees, desserts and refreshing beverages. The evening included a silent and live auction with jewelry, artwork fine photography, gift certificate packages; home furnishings and specialty items. The guests also enjoyed live jazz, hand magic and illusions by Tristan Christ. The event raised $150,000.

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The Ringling Circus Museum's Celebrity Night honored Barry Lubin, Robert Dover and Antoinette Concello on January 16. On January 23 John Ringling's private rail car Wisconsin was placed on display. The car was used by Ringling from 1905 to 1916. The car arrived in Sarasota in August 2008. Additional restoration was done to the car before placing it on display.

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What Went Wrong?

No contemporary source documented the collapse of the Beatty show better than the circus industry's bible, Billboard magazine, which alerted its readers to a 35 percent decrease in attendance for the first nine days of the 12-day Los Angeles run. Traditionally, this early-season stand provided the booster shot to sustain the show during dry spells. Beatty himself later blamed television as the culprit for keeping many families at home and away from the circus marquee.

However, another key contributor—the economy—may have played a significant role, one that was largely overlooked by *Billboard* at the time and in subsequent accounts by circus historians.

In 1955, when many circuses—including Clyde Beatty's—were recording remarkable turnouts, the nation's output of goods and services increased by 7½ percent over the previous year, according to a Commerce Department report released in early 1956. The nation may have suffered a "flash recession" during the last few months of 1955 and the early months of 1956, more than likely induced by a run-up of consumer debt.

"Soft spots this year [1956] are viewed by many as corrections in the excesses of late 1955," The Associated Press reported on June 28. "Then a spree of buying, much of it on easy credit terms, sent record numbers of autos, home appliances and some 1,3000,000 new homes into the hands of consumers—and sent their installment debt to a record 26 billion dollars."

For a different set of reasons, Clyde Beatty was feeling the pinch in his show's bank account well before the 1956 season opened.

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No contemporary source documented the collapse of the Beatty show better than the circus industry's bible, Billboard magazine, which alerted its readers to a 35 percent decrease in attendance for the first nine days of the 12-day Los Angeles run. Traditionally, this early-season stand provided the booster shot to sustain the show during dry spells. Beatty himself later blamed television as the culprit for keeping many families at home and away from the circus marquee.

However, another key contributor—the economy—may have played a significant role, one that was largely overlooked by *Billboard* at the time and in subsequent accounts by circus historians.

In 1955, when many circuses—including Clyde Beatty's—were recording remarkable turnouts, the nation's output of goods and services increased by 7½ percent over the previous year, according to a Commerce Department report released in early 1956. The nation may have suffered a "flash recession" during the last few months of 1955 and the early months of 1956, more than likely induced by a run-up of consumer debt.

"Soft spots this year [1956] are viewed by many as corrections in the excesses of late 1955," The Associated Press reported on June 28. "Then a spree of buying, much of it on easy credit terms, sent record numbers of autos, home appliances and some 1,3000,000 new homes into the hands of consumers—and sent their installment debt to a record 26 billion dollars."

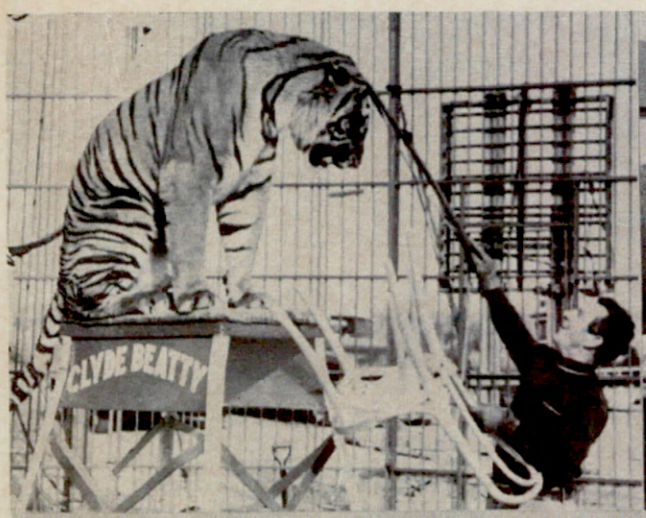
For a different set of reasons, Clyde Beatty was feeling the pinch in his show's bank account well before the 1956 season opened.

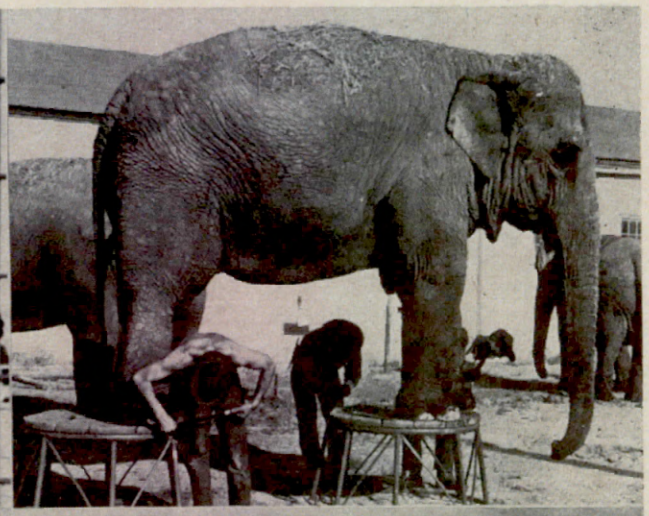
CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS

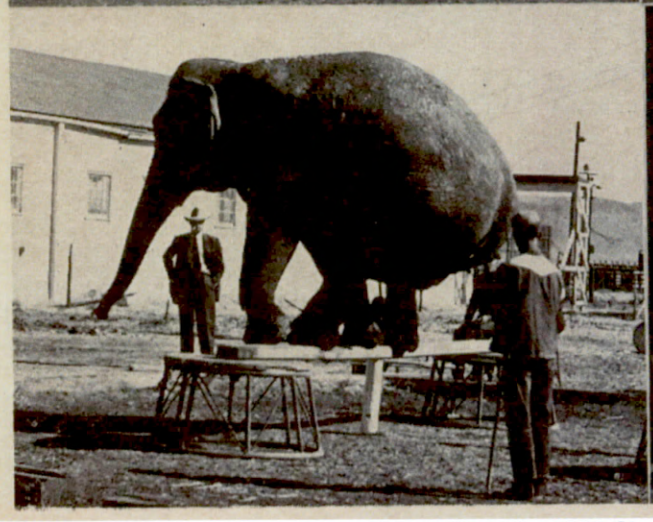
WINTER QUARTERS

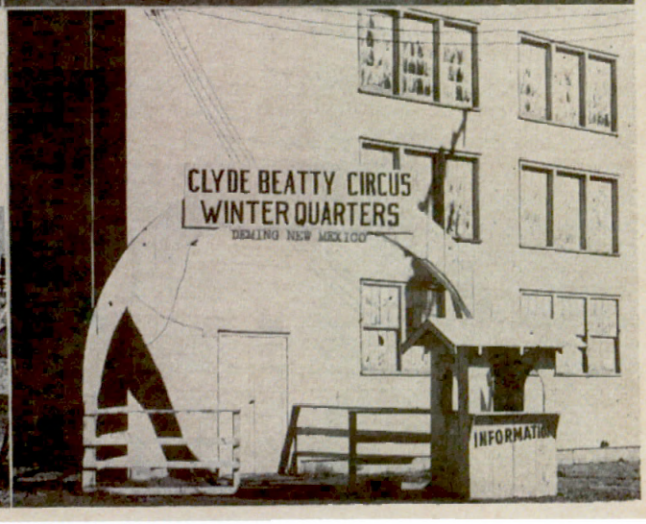
DEMING, NEW MEXICO

KINGDOM OF THE SUN









A page from the 1956 Clyde Beatty Circus program.

He still owed approximately $50,000 on a $100,000 note that he had signed with Arthur M. Concello on February 25, 1955. Concello's loan was secured by a mortgage on Beatty's Monarch Operating Company.

Having been fired in late 1953 from his general manager's post at the Greatest Show on Earth by John Ringling North, Concello entered negotiations with Beatty in 1954, culminating in Concello's gaining a 51 percent controlling interest.

During a 1973 interview with circus historian Tom Parkinson, the former trapeze superstar said that Beatty had approached him in 1954 in desperate straits. Concello said Beatty told him, "Those bastards clipped me in Las Vegas." The troubled owner allegedly asked for Concello's financial help—to the tune of $100,000—to put the circus on the road in 1955.

"Alright, Clyde, I'll tell you what I'll do," Concello recalled in the interview, which was published in the September-October 2001 *Bandwagon*. "I'll take a chattel mortgage on the show, everything you've got; and I'll put a guy [Tuffy Genders] over there to collect my money every day."

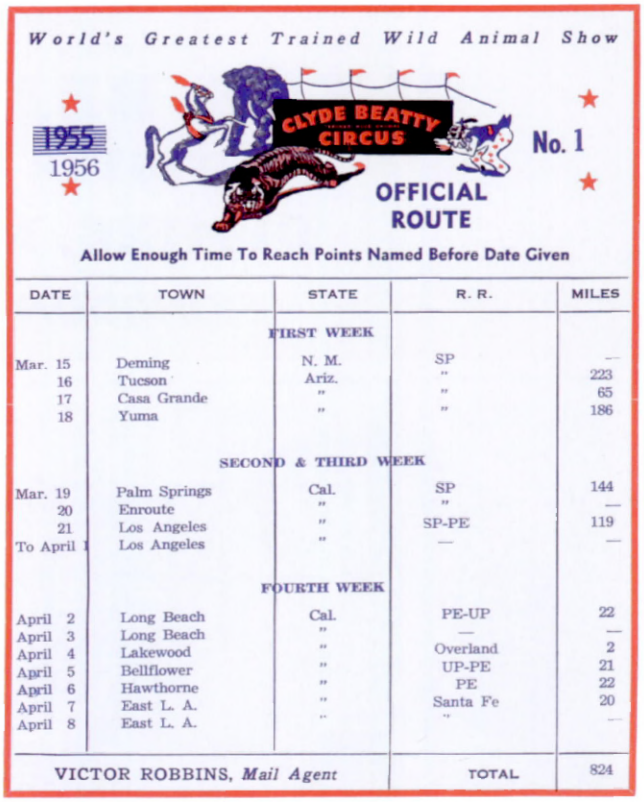
Concello also provided several acts for the Beatty show, for which he would be paid extra, of course.

More significantly, however, Concello, as he had done in his previous ventures with the wild animal trainer, literally began running virtually all aspects the Beatty circus. He introduced a number of expense- and time-saving improvements, including the construction of three new seat wagons by the Lewis Diesel Company in Memphis.

The blunt circus genius also supervised the advance. On February 12, 1955, *Billboard* reported that Concello had fired Beatty's previous general agent and confidant Bill Moore, and assumed personal responsibility for orchestrating the 10-day Los Angeles stand, traditionally the most lucrative on the Beatty route. He assigned Sid Karp—a name that will pop up again in this story--as promotions manager for the Los Angeles metropolitan area dates. Concello's elaborate promotional schemes for the stand included a live, four-hour telecast of the Beatty train's arrival and set up on the Hill and Washington lot on Wednesday morning, March 29. Concello apparently felt it necessary to promote the local TV coverage for two reasons: first, to combat the hype surrounding an NBC network special on the Ringling-Barnum show beamed live from Madison Square Garden to Los Angeles TV audiences on the eve of the Beatty opening, and second, to compete against the 27th annual Oscar ceremonies being held across town on the same night as the Beatty opener. Concello's strategy reportedly yielded handsome returns.

Overall, the 1955 Beatty tour was a winner, enabling the show to pay down Concello's note. "I think I collected $40,000 plus interest," Concello said, "so he [Beatty] still owed me $60,000 the next year."

In an interview with this writer in 2009, Manuel "Junior" Ruffin said that, according to scuttlebutt around the circus backyard, Beatty regained control at the end of the 1955 season. However, Concello's mortgage remained to be paid off, and the beleaguered owner apparently still needed more money to take the show out in 1956. Beatty was rebuffed in this endeavor by Mrs. Frank Walter of Houston, an earlier investor, Ruffin said.



World's Greatest Trained Wild Animal Show

1955 1956

CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS

No. 1

OFFICIAL ROUTE

Allow Enough Time To Reach Points Named Before Date Given

DATE	TOWN	STATE	R. R.	MILES
		FIRST WEEK		
Mar. 15	Deming	N. M.	SP	—
16	Tucson	Ariz.	"	223
17	Casa Grande	"	"	65
18	Yuma	"	"	186
		SECOND & THIRD WEEK		
Mar. 19	Palm Springs	Cal.	SP	144
20	Enroute	"	"	—
21	Los Angeles	"	SP-PE	119
To April 1	Los Angeles	"	—	—
		FOURTH WEEK		
April 2	Long Beach	Cal.	PE-UP	22
April 3	Long Beach	"	—	—
April 4	Lakewood	"	Overland	2
April 5	Bellflower	"	UP-PE	21
April 6	Hawthorne	"	PE	22
April 7	East L. A.	"	Santa Fe	20
April 8	East L. A.	"	"	—
VICTOR ROBBINS, *Mail Agent*			TOTAL	824

The No. 1 route card for the opening of the 1956 season.

Enter McClosky, Kernan

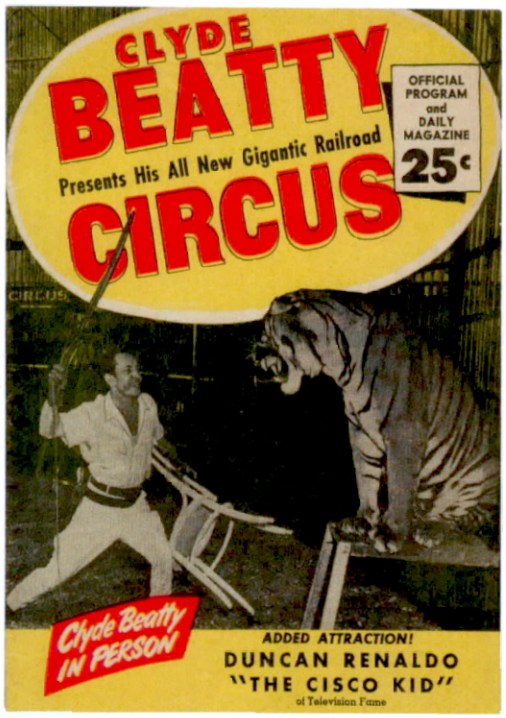
As a last resort, the financially-strapped owner turned to Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan, both of whom had served under Concello as Ringling-Barnum managers before they too were fired by John Ringling North's new executive director, Michael Burke, during the 1955 season.

On January 19 Beatty signed a $17,000 note pledging his circus assets as collateral with McClosky and Kernan as a part of their taking the show's concession privilege. In all likelihood the two new investors, who had been associated with Beatty off and on since the mid-1940s, were not aware of the existence of Concello's mortgage on the show's assets, which superseded theirs.

How McClosky and Kernan got a foothold on the circus is a story intimately familiar to Johnny Pugh, who was a manager on Beatty-Cole under McClosky in the 1960s. Pugh has owned the show since 1982, making him the dean of active circus proprietors.

Here's the Pugh account: McCloskey and Kernan, after being kicked off the Ringling-Barnum lot at St. Paul, Minnesota, at mid-season in 1955, went on to produce the Hollywood Thrill Dare Devils, an auto stunt show similar to Joey Chitwood's. "They took it to Europe, and my father [British producer/promoter "Digger" Pugh] booked it there for them," Pugh recalled during an interview in early 2010. "During the tour, Bob Reynolds [former Ringling prop boss] happened to call up Frank and Walter—he was known as Punchy Forbes—and he said to them, 'Look guys, you can buy the concession rights to the Beatty show for 50 grand.'

"Unfortunately for my father and everybody over there, they took the offer in a flash to get back to the states and left



The 1956 Clyde Beatty program.

my father hanging with the [thrill] show. And they took over the Beatty concessions."

The *Billboard*, in an account dated February 18 and dateline Macon, Georgia, reported that McClosky, Kernan, Reynolds and Willis Lawson (an ex-Ringling concessions manager) had chartered the Atlas Concession Corp. "to operate food and drink concessions and sell novelties, programs, coloring books and other similar items.

"Reynolds is to be superintendent of the Clyde Beatty Circus this season, and the firm is said to have the concessions there." That triggered a court battle between Acme and National Concessions of Buffalo, New York, which claimed it still held the contract for Beatty's concessions.

Based on the show's impressive route and performance roster, which included a new co-star, the new concessionaires probably shared Beatty's optimism that the 1956 season would bring a repeat of the successful 1955 tour.

Following its extended tour of California, the show intended to swing through the Midwest before invading traditional Ringling-Barnum territory in the South.

"Top brass on Beatty, it's understood, feel this is the year to take a shot at the Big One's stomping grounds because of the many elements which have coated Ringling with the vulnerability," reported the *Billboard* in a story dated March 3. Big Bertha faced a continuation of picketing by Teamsters and the performers' guild, who were attempting to organize the gigantic circus's 1,100 or so employees.

Cisco Kid Shares Billing

For the first time since Beatty relocated his winter quarters to Deming in October 1953, the smaller but potent entourage chose its adopted community as the season-opening site. On March 2 the weekly Deming Headlight published a flowery announcement: "'The 'Cisco Kid' will ride high, wide and handsome into the big tents set up at the Deming airport on Thursday afternoon, March 15, when the Clyde Beatty Circus season opens here with one matinee performance. . .

"The Cisco Kid is one of O. Henry's disarming character creations and as played by Duncan Renaldo has copped high poll rating as one of the most popular television personalities. Addition of Cisco to the 1956 edition of the Clyde Beatty Circus brings together for the first time under the big top, two outstanding adventure stars of the show world—Clyde Beatty, world's greatest wild animal trainer, and Duncan Renaldo, TV's Cisco Kid.

"Both will be seen at every performance without additional charge. . . .

"Renaldo's television cast will appear with him, enacting a scene from one of his latest TV films. This 'Robin Hood of the West' will ride his famous horse, Diablo, right into the hearts of circus goers.

"For 1956, the wild animal display of Mr. Circus himself, Clyde Beatty, has been enlarged with newly imported lions and tigers direct from the jungles of India and Africa. Today, it is the largest mixed group ever presented by any wild animal trainer in one arena."

In reality Beatty carried about 20 big cats in the three cage wagons and worked 10 lions and four tigers in most performances, reminded Junior Ruffin.

Little did Deming-area fans realize they would host the circus's second farewell performance just four and a half months later.

The seat wagons ordered by Concello.

Following load out under trainmaster Otis Leslie's supervision, the 15 freshly-painted cars made an overnight jump for two performances on March 16 at Tucson. Stands at Casa Grande and Yuma preceded a fateful entry into California. Wind and cold temperatures greeted the show at Palm Springs on March 19. To a believer in bad omens, this was one.

What ordinarily would have been a triumphant entry worthy of Caesar and his conquering army into the lucrative Los Angeles market became an unmitigated nightmare.

Rain, Rain, Go Away

Los Angeles was a show stopper in the worst sense. A combination of factors intervened to preclude even the remote possibility that the circus would be able to shore up its cash reserves for the remainder of the tour.

First, the show had to set up at a new location. With the highly visible downtown lot at Washington and Hill no longer available, tent boss Joe Applegate and his crew raised the big top at the Los Angeles Coliseum, at 39th St. and Vermont Ave. The new lot, however, offered more space to attractively display Charlie Cox's side show and the menagerie leading into the big top, as well as much improved parking facilities.

Next, the opening night performance on Wednesday, March 21, which traditionally attracted Hollywood movie

celebrities and the press, competed with the annual Academy Awards ceremonies being staged across town at exactly the same time. However, this may not have loomed as a particularly decisive factor, since the Beatty show also had its 1955 Los Angeles debut against the same motion picture celebration at the Pantages Theatre.

Despite increased spending on newspaper ads and radio-TV promotion, the use of six 60-inch spotlights and the offering of free food and booze for the press, "crowds . . . were conspicuous by their absence at both of the opening-day performances," reported the *Billboard's* Sam Abbot.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Concello.

The third strike against the circus came on the closing weekend, when already spotty business turned even worse. Heavy rains started Saturday night, March 31, resulting in a half house. On Sunday, April Fool's Day, the rain turned to hail, then snow, cutting attendance to less than a half house at the matinee and a paltry 500 patrons for the night show.

In a May 14 AP story Beatty's Los Angeles attorney, Howard Levine, revealed that the circus "had a $5,000 daily overhead. One day in the Los Angeles area, the combined day and night performance grossed only $1,851.29."

As if these problems were not enough, Beatty announced that his co-star would be leaving the show on April 16, according to the Billboard, "by mutual agreement." "Renaldo's move to leave came about when his TV sponsors refused to let him appear in an extra-charge appearance," the trade journal noted, which meant the circus was deprived of the additional revenue from the planned wild west concert. Renaldo later extended his stay to May 20, when the circus was to have left California and played Reno, Nevada.

Cisco Kid Drags the Midway

The Cisco Kid, in addition to his participating in the opening spec, "Fiesta Time," was featured in a center-ring melodrama. His routine was later shifted from midpoint of the two-hour performance to the third from last act in hopes of keeping kids glued to their seats to see Hugo Zacchini being fired from his cannon.

A circus release explained that in the western-themed skit, titled "'The Holdup of the Old Prospector,' Poodles Hanneford plays the role of the prospector, with Rex Rossi, Billy Hammond and Rex Russell, veteran actors, playing the bandits. The playlet is climaxed . . . as Reynaldo, the Cisco Kid, rides his famous horse Diablo to the prospector's rescue."

Renaldo's was probably relieved, Ruffin said, that the press was not on hand to witness his entry into the tent on opening day.

"During the dates from Deming to Los Angeles, they didn't even have a horse for Duncan Renaldo," Ruffin recalled. "They went out searching for one that looked like the one he used in the movies. (Actually, Reynaldo told a Long Beach newsman, the Kid had seven Diablo lookalikes for his TV takes.) Finally they found one, and the cowboys who were doing the wild west show prepared the horse for the big opening date at the Coliseum.

"And when Charlie Cox, the sideshow barker, announced him, they opened the curtain and down the flats came Renaldo on his horse, with his sombrero sticking straight out. But instead of making a turn to the left, the horse went to the right through the marquee, then jumped a rail and threw the Cisco Kid off, and was dragging him across the midway.

"After that [incident], the Cisco Kid never rode the horse again. [During subsequent appearances] he walked in beside the bandwagon into the ring, and they had two performers leading the horse.

"And that is a true story," Ruffin proclaimed, a grin spreading across his face.

The show's publicity corps got good media coverage of the train's arrival in nearby Long Beach on Long Beach on April 2 for a two-day run at Veterans Stadium. "Clyde Wows Cats, Cisco Wows Kids," the Long Beach Independent headlined its review of the first night's show.

"Clyde Beatty, under the tent bearing his name, is still a champion at raw, bone-chilling fright by induction," wrote Independent scribe Bob Hauser. "He still plays his black-maned Nubian lions and Royal Bengal tigers close to the vest. . . .

"Duncan Reynaldo, TV's Cisco Kid . . . gave a fatherly warning against playing with firearms, promised the youngsters a personal autograph after the show, and staged a TV-type fight with three bad guys. Cisco kept his promise and his popularity."

From Long Beach, the Beatty tome worked its way down to San Diego for a four-day stint, April 12-15. Once again, rain dampened attendance for the first two days, but the two ticket wagons did land-office business on Saturday and Sunday, when an extra performance was necessitated to accommodate crowds.

Inez Kills Worker

On Wednesday, April 18, the show suffered the first in a series of accidents that plagued the bad-luck outfit right up to its closing. The county coroner ruled that Andrew Grotzky, of Grand Island, Nebraska, was apparently kicked to death by an elephant in the menagerie.

Prompted by the *Billboard* account of the mishap, Ruffin remembered the incident, which he said occurred prior to the matinee at Hemet, California The circus worker, who was not an elephant hand, apparently had approached Inez from the rear as the elephants were on the picket line in the menagerie top. "Inez was a problem ever since she was on the show," Ruffin said.

Now in his fourth season as Beatty's cage boy, the black teenager had only recently earned pocket money by helping the elephant crew walk their charges to and from the train. This arrangement was expedient for elephant superintendent Richard Shipley, who was driving his own private trailer between lots.

"A lot of people didn't like Richard Shipley," Ruffin said, "but I thought he was one of the greatest ever; of course, he was the only elephant trainer I worked under. He taught me everything, from trimming their toenails to using the blowtorch to cut their hair."

Eager to please, Ruffin also took on a high-risk chore: tying down elephants in their stock car at night. "Two of them were the toughest elephants that ever was known—Inez and Kora. And they had to be chained clear up against the bulk of the train." The two stock cars were normally placed immediately behind the engine, he pointed out, to limit the swaying motion experienced by the trailing flats and sleepers.

"I used to go in there, and I'd shine the flashlight on me so they could see me in the dark--it was alright when we were hooked up to the coaches, because the coaches had lights, but most of the time they were separated. I would go in there and tell them to give me a foot. In order to get them to the back of the stock car, I would have to crawl in between these elephants to chain their back legs. Several of those [elephant handlers] got kicked. Let me tell you, once you've been kicked by an elephant, you've been kicked. But you know what? They never kicked me. Elephants are just that way. Some trainers would go by and they wouldn't do nothing. Next guy that come by they'd knock him clear off the street. That was fun then, [but] there's no way on earth I would do those things now even if they gave me the key to Fort Knox."

Walter Kernan.

Only three days after Inez had kicked Grotzky to death in Hemet, another circus worker suffered head injuries and a broken shoulder when a wagon came loose from a flat car as the train arrived in Santa Monica. On April 28 Joe Applegate and the Bogino risley troupe left the show. Ruffin attributed the departure of the boss canvasman to a freak eye injury Applegate had suffered while he was presenting elephants in the center ring. His temporary replacement was Paul Pyle, a veteran of the old Dailey Bros. Circus.

Payless Paydays

As the circus train continued to crisscross the Los Angeles area to play dates booked by general agent Bill Moore, performers were being stiffed on payday. Until that point, Ruffin said he and other members of the owner's cage crew hadn't been aware of the show's deteriorating financial condition. "When Beatty went into the arena, I never looked around to see if there were people in the seats. That just didn't concern me."

Besides, "all the band people [represented by the musician's union] and the working people got paid," said Ruffin, quickly adding that "the working men's salaries weren't that much in the first place. Take Joe Applegate, for example. If I'm not mistaken, he was only getting $35 a week. And the elephant man, Richard Shipley, I think he was getting only $30, but he also had the pony ride [privilege]."

Members of the George Hanneford troupe were among performers who stayed during the payless drought and, in true circus tradition, continued to entertain circus goers.

The circus traveled as far north as Vistula and Merced—both lots being described as "out in the country"-- before heading back into its previously profitable Los Angeles environs.

Hard luck and spotty attendance finally wore down America's second largest circus. A scant seven weeks into the season, performers unknowingly gave their last performances in California at San Bernardino on May 8.

"When we pulled into Burbank [on Wednesday, May 9], that was the end," Ruffin said.

"We set up there, but we had no idea what was going on. We were already set [for the matinee performance]. The cats were already in the chute. And the spec was getting ready to go."

A measly 150 paid ticket holders were scattered in a big top designed to seat up to 4,000.

Before band leader Victor Robbins and his band could cue the opening spec, general manager Frank Orman gave the no-go signal. Ruffin vaguely remembers someone making the announcement, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're sorry; we're cancelling this show."

Two representatives of the American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA) had shown up on the Burbank lot and ordered the unpaid performers to withhold their services. According to a United Press account on May 11, "the guild said the circus was three weeks behind in salaries and couldn't promise when a demand for $15,000 in wages could be met." This amount included two weeks of past due salary and a week's holdback.

"And that [back pay] was what it was all about," said Ruffin. "We had to turn all the cats around in the tunnel and run them back to their cages." After a lengthy delay workers got orders to strike the tents and load the wagons for the short haul to the train, which sat on a siding at Burbank until the next day.

Concello's Surprise

And guess who pulled up in a cab? Art Concello.

His sudden arrival on the Burbank lot triggered a two-month battle royale between Concello and his key former Ringling-Barnum subordinates—McCloskey and Kernan—for total control of the Beatty outfit. At the center of the struggle was Clyde Beatty, who apparently had deceived both warring parties in his never-ending search for money to keep the show going.

As Beatty's show neared collapse in the spring of 1956, Concello had his Mexican vacation interrupted by an alarming phone call from Tuffy Genders. "I show up out there around the Los Angeles area and the damn thing is about to close," Concello told Parkinson during the 1973 interview. "In the meantime, McClosky and Kernan have bought the concessions; so they've advanced him some money. They didn't know what to think when I showed up [in Burbank]."

Johnny Pugh, in his interview with this writer, said McClosky filled in the details from the concessionaires' viewpoint. "What happened, Clyde—you know he was a great performer and I really liked him, but he wasn't a business operator—came to those guys every week, and he'd say, 'Hey, I need $3,000 or $4,000 or $5,000.' Because the show was not doing good as it came across the West.

"Finally, Frank and Walter said, 'That's the end of it; we're not going to come up with the money.' And Clyde said, 'Well, I'll bankrupt it.' So they made a deal to take over the show from Clyde. But what they didn't realize was that Concello at that time had the first lien on the show for 50 grand. And he was on the way to take over the show."

Ruffin was able to shed additional light on the Burbank confrontation, pointing out that his being a black teenager effectively rendered him "invisible" in the background during some crucial discussions. Concello offered to pour additional dollars into reorganizing the Beatty circus, but only if the celebrated trainer agreed to take the show train to the Jungleland Compound at nearby Thousand Oaks. "But Beatty refused to do it, and he hauled it all back to Deming," Ruffin said.

The Beatty show never returned to California, points out circus historian John Polacsek, who maintains the most complete collection of circus routes in America.

Ruffin was among the score of workingmen who made the two-day train ride back to Deming. One of the First-of-May cage hands who found himself without a job, according to Ruffin, was Charles Schlarbaum. "When the show folded, Chuck went to the Army after that." Schlarbaum returned years later to direct the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. big top band. Ruffin also recalled that Mary Ruth Herriott was a web aerialist during the truncated California run. Mrs. Herriott, wife of equestrian John Herriott, brought along the couple's first daughter, 3-month-old Laura.

Frank McClosky.

Many other Beatty troupers had nothing to fall back on. On May 12, the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* reported that "the [AGVA] union is advancing funds for food and lodging to 51 performers who were left stranded in Oxnard when the show folded. In scrambling for new jobs, six acts have already signed for a weekly television show."

Some performers found work on spot dates. For example, "Chef Milani's Food Circus" advertised the "Johnny Cline Dog and Pony Act from Clyde Beatty Circus" for its outdoor show on July 21 on the Safeway supermarket parking lot at Oxnard.

Beatty Pre-empts Creditors

Immediately after the shutdown, Beatty flew to Macon, Georgia, where he had chartered the National Circus Corporation in 1949, to seek federal court protection against the seizure of his circus. His petition for voluntary bankruptcy, filed on May 18, listed liabilities of $280,000. The May 26 *Billboard* provided details: "The court papers reveal that Concello holds a first mortgage on National, and that Monarch Circus Equipment, which owns the Beatty equipment, pledged that equipment as security for the loan to National. The mortgage is paid up to date but $48,779.30 will come due in future months. McClosky and Kernan . . . held a second mortgage for $16,200. Other liabilities include $16,525.86 for wages, $27,911 in federal taxes, $7,850 in salaries due to the advance department and agent, and a judgment of $25,275.60 awarded Roland Miller, former employee, in a personal injury court action at Merced, Calif., recently.

Jerry Collins.

"Assets of National were listed as two typewriters, an adding machine and some unused advertising paper, for a total value of $260. Beatty's cats, act and private car are not involved. . . ."

Negotiations to settle the ownership struggle continued in the background. On June 10, two days before bankruptcy hearing in Georgia, the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* reported: "Clyde Beatty said here last night that 'he did not think it was possible' that his circus would go on the road to play against Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus this year.

"The world famous animal trainer was in town to discuss plans for the circus and to fish with two former Ringling Circus general managers—Art Concello and Frank McClosky. He said they were unable to reach any agreement on the show.

"Beatty . . . leaves today for Macon, Ga., and then heads west to his home in Santa Paulo, Calif. . . ."

Testifying at bankruptcy hearings at Macon on June 12, the hapless owner—according to a United Press International report--blamed television for doing "what none of his 'big cats' could do in 33 years, put him out of business. . . . Beatty said that television has steadily cut into the business of the circus since 1952."

Beatty's rationalization ran counter to the experiences of other tented circuses which were not only surviving but

apparently thriving. An AP story dated July 23 carried responses of three spokesmen among the 23 regional circuses still on the road:

"'Business is up 30 per cent over last year,' reported R. W. Cowls of the Hagen Bros. outfit from Wisconsin.

"'Very good—although not quite up to last year,' said Charles Cuthbert of the Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros combine in Chicago.

"'The circus under canvas isn't through,' asserted Belmonte Cristiani as the Cristiani Bros. show played Ogdensburg, N.Y."

Concello Tightens Screws

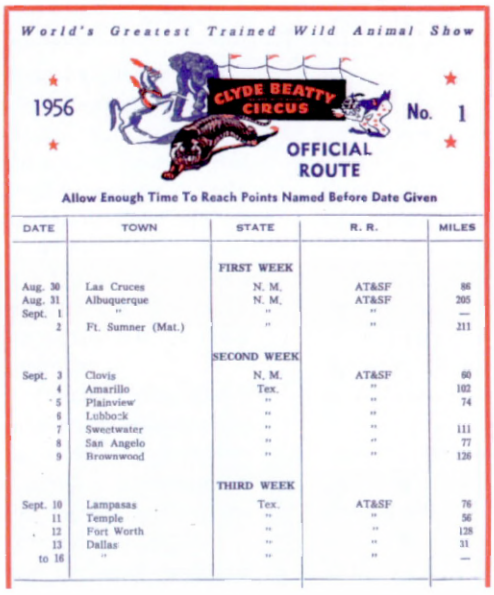
Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes negations produced a tentative settlement on June 13—the day after Beatty's testimony. According to a copy of the court document provided to this writer by historian Fred Pfening Jr., Beatty acknowledged his circus was in default to Concello on the first lien dated February 25, 1955, and to McClosky and Kernan on the second mortgage dated January 19, 1956. Given his superior standing in the debt structure, Concello clearly was able to dictate the terms.

Obviously recognizing that no one could be repaid as long as the circus sat idle at winter quarters in Deming, Concello by terms of the agreement would allow McClosky and Kernan to select "any properties which they deem to be needed in the operation of a small truck circus of about fifteen trucks. . . .

"It is understood that McClosky and Kernan intend to sell the equipment selected by them to Concello, or to a corporation to be organized by Concello. McClosky and Kernan then intend to organize a company to lease said properties furnished by Concello . . . and to put on the road a small truck circus . . . with an overall operating expense of not more than $1,000 a day."

Surplus assets were to be sold, with receipts designated to pay off the note holders.

August 15 was seen as opening date for the reorganized show, which would still carry Beatty's name. However, the signed document stipulated that "Clyde Beatty agrees to work his wild animal act as directed by the management of the operating company as many times a day as business warrants. Beatty's sole duty is to work his act and he will not in any way be connected with the operating company as an officer but he shall be an independent contractor."



DATE	TOWN	STATE	R. R.	MILES
		FIRST WEEK		
Aug. 30	Las Cruces	N. M.	AT&SF	86
Aug. 31	Albuquerque	N. M.	AT&SF	205
Sept. 1	"	"	"	—
2	Ft. Sumner (Mat.)	"	"	211
		SECOND WEEK		
Sept. 3	Clovis	N. M.	AT&SF	60
4	Amarillo	Tex.	"	102
5	Plainview	"	"	74
6	Lubbock	"	"	
7	Sweetwater	"	"	111
8	San Angelo	"	"	77
9	Brownwood	"	"	126
		THIRD WEEK		
Sept. 10	Lampasas	Tex.	AT&SF	76
11	Temple	"	"	56
12	Fort Worth	"	"	128
13	Dallas	"	"	31
to 16	"	"	"	—

The Beatty route card for the second 1956 tour.

The trainer would remain under contract through the end of 1960. In the meantime "Clyde Beatty agrees to assign all future contracts for his act to Arthur M. Concello, authorizing Concello to receive all moneys from winter engagements and any other engagements performed away from the circus. . . . Beatty will receive up to the amount of $1,000 per week plus expenses . . . with any excess amounts to be applied against [debts to Concello, McClosky and Kernan]."

In return, Beatty was to receive a $1,000 weekly draw for expenses. He also was to collect one-third of any net profits—with the understanding that this amount would be applied against the indebtedness of, first, Concello, and then McClosky and Kernan. Once these debts were cleared, Beatty would regain ownership of his lions and tigers, plus the props used in his act. Beatty's private rail car was exempt from the mortgages.

Further, the agreement dictated that the operating company was to "set up as a winter quarter fund $100 per day during the tense [tent?] season," this an apparent acknowledgement that the show-owned liberty horses were being slaughtered to feed Beatty's hungry cats at Deming.

All these conditions were based on Beatty's placing $25,000 in cash in Concello's hands by June 18—or else.

The Deal's Off

"Beatty Circus Property Will Be Sold Under Foreclosure." This was the headline of a June 29 report in the Deming *Headlight* announcing that the show's physical assets would be auctioned off on Saturday, July 21, "at the front door of the Luna County courthouse in this city." Concello's foreclosure action was separate from the bankruptcy proceedings in Georgia.

"Deming regrets the misfortune of Clyde Beatty," the *Headlight* observed in a separate front-page column. "It is almost certain that the circus will be bought by someone who will bring it back on the road. If so, we all hope they will continue to winter-quarter in Deming. "

Less than three weeks later—on July 11--the pending auction became a moot issue when the parties finally resolved their differences.

Consequences of the deal must have been unsettling to the circus's Deming hosts. The Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* announced the settlement on July 16—ironically the day John Ringling North unexpectedly closed the Big One in Pittsburgh: "Two former Ringling veterans, Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan, will head a group of former Ringling officials who have purchased the Clyde Beatty and will operate it out of Sarasota.

"The group will operate as the Acme Circus Operation Co. Both McClosky and Kernan were with Ringling nearly 30 years. McClosky left Sarasota Saturday [July 14] for Deming , N.M., present winter quarters of the Beatty show. The purchase was arranged Wednesday [July 11]. McClosky said a lien held by Art Concello, also a Ringling executive, was dissolved by the purchase.

"Winter quarters here will be on U.S. 301 and some 300 to 350 members of the circus will be [in Sarasota] during the off season. The officials said the name of the show would be retained and Beatty would continue to be featured."

Though McClosky and Kernan emerged as the clear victors in the struggle, the issue over who actually owned the rejuvenated Beatty circus remained a puzzle to

circus historians for decades to come.

Collins to the Rescue

The ownership question was partially clarified in a July 21 Sarasota Herald-Tribune story by Paul Einstein, a veteran on the Sarasota circus beat: "Equipment of the Clyde Beatty Circus has been acquired by a holding company headed by Jerry Collins, Sarasota dog track owner, and Randolph Calhoun, Sarasota attorney. . . . Collins is president of the corporation and Calhoun is chairman of the board. . . .

"While Collins and Calhoun own the equipment, they will have absolutely nothing to do with its operation . . . Collins and Calhoun emphasized that they own only the equipment and that it is leased to the operating company. They stressed that there are no interlocking directorships. . . .

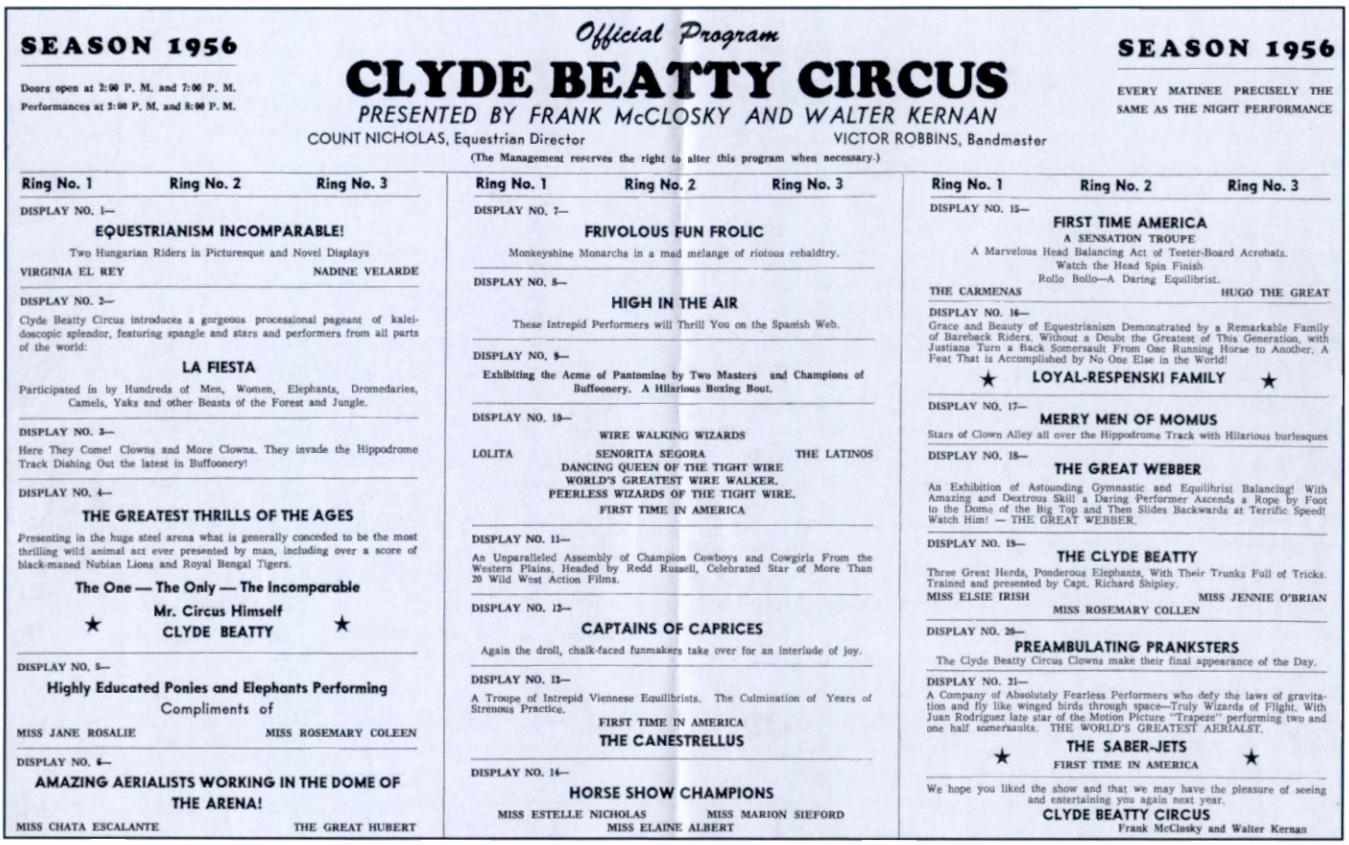
"The Acme Circus Operating Co., headed by Frank McClosky, Walter Kernan and Sid Karp, will run the show. [Karp, as noted earlier, had been promotional manager for the Beatty show in 1955 under Concello's aegis. He assumed similar duties on the 1956 season-ending tour.]

"Originally, the circus was scheduled to go up on the auction block in Deming today. The show was so broke that six Liberty horses were slaughtered to feed the lions. [Concello's] mortgage was paid off by Collins and Randolph in their transaction with Beatty.

"Collins refused to state the cost of the assets. He only commented, 'It was plenty.' [In an AP interview in late 1982, when Collins was attempting to find a buyer for the Beatty-Cole show, he claimed to have bought the circus at the sheriff's auction in Deming for $80,000. "It would have died 27 years ago if it had not been for me," he was quoted in a December 23, 1981 dispatch—just before he donated the circus to Florida State University at year's end.]

"Asked why he invested in the circus with the Ringling and King Bros., along with the Beatty shows going broke, Collins said: 'With the finest personnel in the business running the show, the best acts available and proper financing, we feel that the tent show will be successful and will go on for time immemorial. . . .

"'Ringling failed because it took the circus out of the circus,' he said. 'Oldtimers such as McClosky and Kernan know and understand the operation of the circus, which we recognize.'



SEASON 1956

Doors open at 2:00 P. M. and 7:00 P. M.
Performances at 3:00 P. M. and 8:00 P. M.

Official Program

CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS

PRESENTED BY FRANK McCLOSKY AND WALTER KERNAN

COUNT NICHOLAS, Equestrian Director — VICTOR ROBBINS, Bandmaster

(The Management reserves the right to alter this program when necessary.)

SEASON 1956

EVERY MATINEE PRECISELY THE SAME AS THE NIGHT PERFORMANCE

Ring No. 1 — Ring No. 2 — Ring No. 3

DISPLAY NO. 1—
EQUESTRIANISM INCOMPARABLE!
Two Hungarian Riders in Picturesque and Novel Displays
VIRGINIA EL REY — NADINE VELARDE

DISPLAY NO. 2—
Clyde Beatty Circus introduces a gorgeous processional pageant of kaleidoscopic splendor, featuring spangle and stars and performers from all parts of the world:
LA FIESTA
Participated in by Hundreds of Men, Women, Elephants, Dromedaries, Camels, Yaks and other Beasts of the Forest and Jungle.

DISPLAY NO. 3—
Here They Come! Clowns and More Clowns. They invade the Hippodrome Track Dishing Out the latest in Buffoonery!

DISPLAY NO. 4—
THE GREATEST THRILLS OF THE AGES
Presenting in the huge steel arena what is generally conceded to be the most thrilling wild animal act ever presented by man, including over a score of black-maned Nubian Lions and Royal Bengal Tigers.
The One — The Only — The Incomparable
★ Mr. Circus Himself CLYDE BEATTY ★

DISPLAY NO. 5—
Highly Educated Ponies and Elephants Performing
Compliments of
MISS JANE ROSALIE — MISS ROSEMARY COLEEN

DISPLAY NO. 6—
AMAZING AERIALISTS WORKING IN THE DOME OF THE ARENA!
MISS CHATA ESCALANTE — THE GREAT HUBERT

Ring No. 1 — Ring No. 2 — Ring No. 3

DISPLAY NO. 7—
FRIVOLOUS FUN FROLIC
Monkeyshine Monarchs in a mad melange of riotous rebaldtry.

DISPLAY NO. 8—
HIGH IN THE AIR
These Intrepid Performers will Thrill You on the Spanish Web.

DISPLAY NO. 9—
Exhibiting the Acme of Pantomine by Two Masters and Champions of Buffoonery. A Hilarious Boxing Bout.

DISPLAY NO. 10—
WIRE WALKING WIZARDS
LOLITA — SENORITA SEGORA — THE LATINOS
DANCING QUEEN OF THE TIGHT WIRE
WORLD'S GREATEST WIRE WALKER.
PEERLESS WIZARDS OF THE TIGHT WIRE.
FIRST TIME IN AMERICA

DISPLAY NO. 11—
An Unparalleled Assembly of Champion Cowboys and Cowgirls From the Western Plains. Headed by Redd Russell, Celebrated Star of More Than 20 Wild West Action Films.

DISPLAY NO. 12—
CAPTAINS OF CAPRICES
Again the droll, chalk-faced funmakers take over for an interlude of joy.

DISPLAY NO. 13—
A Troupe of Intrepid Viennese Equilibrists. The Culmination of Years of Strenous Practice.
FIRST TIME IN AMERICA
THE CANESTRELLUS

DISPLAY NO. 14—
HORSE SHOW CHAMPIONS
MISS ESTELLE NICHOLAS — MISS MARION SIEFORD
MISS ELAINE ALBERT

Ring No. 1 — Ring No. 2 — Ring No. 3

DISPLAY NO. 15—
FIRST TIME AMERICA
A SENSATION TROUPE
A Marvelous Head Balancing Act of Teeter-Board Acrobats.
Watch the Head Spin Finish
Rollo Bollo—A Daring Equilibrist.
THE CARMENAS — HUGO THE GREAT

DISPLAY NO. 16—
Grace and Beauty of Equestrianism Demonstrated by a Remarkable Family of Bareback Riders. Without a Doubt the Greatest of This Generation, with Justiana Turn a Back Somersault From One Running Horse to Another. A Feat That is Accomplished by No One Else in the World!
★ LOYAL-RESPENSKI FAMILY ★

DISPLAY NO. 17—
MERRY MEN OF MOMUS
Stars of Clown Alley all over the Hippodrome Track with Hilarious burlesques

DISPLAY NO. 18—
THE GREAT WEBBER
An Exhibition of Astounding Gymnastic and Equilibrist Balancing! With Amazing and Dextrous Skill a Daring Performer Ascends a Rope by Foot to the Dome of the Big Top and Then Slides Backwards at Terrific Speed! Watch Him! — THE GREAT WEBBER.

DISPLAY NO. 19—
THE CLYDE BEATTY
Three Great Herds, Ponderous Elephants, With Their Trunks Full of Tricks. Trained and presented by Capt. Richard Shipley.
MISS ELSIE IRISH — MISS JENNIE O'BRIAN
MISS ROSEMARY COLLEN

DISPLAY NO. 20—
PREAMBULATING PRANKSTERS
The Clyde Beatty Circus Clowns make their final appearance of the Day.

DISPLAY NO. 21—
A Company of Absolutely Fearless Performers who defy the laws of gravitation and fly like winged birds through space—Truly Wizards of Flight. With Juan Rodriguez late star of the Motion Picture "Trapeze" performing two and one half somersaults. THE WORLD'S GREATEST AERIALST.
★ THE SABER-JETS ★
FIRST TIME IN AMERICA

We hope you liked the show and that we may have the pleasure of seeing and entertaining you again next year.
CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS
Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan

The program for the second 1956 tour.

"Ownership of circus equipment is a first with Collins, who has been successful in widespread dog track promotions, although he professes to be an old circus fan. . . . Collins said he is a long-time personal friend of John Ringling North, president of the Ringling Circus. . . .

"The promoter, who recently sold his interest in the Volusia Kennel Club in Daytona Beach for $500,000, is now owner and general manager of the Sanford-Orlando Kennel Club and secretary-treasurer of the Sarasota Kennel Club. Calhoun is attorney and an officer of both tracks."

Trolling for Circus—the Reel Deal

Not until November 10, 1961, following Calhoun's death, were details revealed on the early-July 1956 fishing trip that eliminated Concello as a participant in the Beatty show's reemergence. Again, Sarasota Journal correspondent Edelson got the scoop: "The circus that rose from the dead!

"That's what Jerry Collins says of the Clyde Beatty Circus, recalling how six years ago he pumped the life-giving

greenbacks into the famed show when its tent had folded. . . .

'Collins, looking robust and confident as ever, told how he was launched into the circus business. He was fishing about his boat Greyhound in Boca Grande Pass when Beatty, Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan came aboard to ask him to finance the circus.

"With him was the late Randolph Calhoun. . . .

"The circus was in bad shape. The horse act was being fed to the lions. Show people were out of work. Johnny North said the circus was dead, Collins recalled.

"'I wanted to put them back to work. . . . that's the truth,' the former three-term legislator from Florida said."

Wagon No. 46 carried the menagerie..

So, all the parties were happy with the deal, right? To borrow from an old expression, it depended on whose ox was being gored. For starters:

Art Concello, the rejected diminutive suitor. Was he willing to let bygones be bygones? Johnny Pugh supplied a plausible answer. "In fact, I later said to Mr. McClosky, 'You know, people say that Art kind of had it in for you.' And he said, 'No, I cut up more money [with Concello] than you can count on the Ringling show.'"

McClosky had been head of "the sneeze mob" which trailed Concello when he left Beatty in 1947 to return to the Ringling fold as general manager. After that, pointed out the London, England, *Telegraph* in 2001, "Concello was soon named 'Little Caesar,' in part because of the cut he took from the petty criminal rackets which attended the affairs of the show."

Not long after exiting from his latest oversight scrimmage with Beatty in mid-1956, Concello was back in talks with John Ringling North, who initially sloughed off Concello's visit to the Ringling-Barnum winter quarters as "merely social." Almost no one was surprised to learn in coming weeks that North had promoted Concello to executive director in charge of planning the Big One's 1957 tour in arenas and ballparks.

Frank McClosky, the gravel-voiced, gruff, died-in-the-wool circus veteran who formerly placed want ads in local newspapers across America and hired the mostly unskilled laborers at the front door. Now he was the decision-maker on all future operations of the Beatty tome.

Walter Kernan, McClosky's alter ego, whose ability to sense the public's entertainment tastes and whose genial disposition was essential to ironing out conflicts made him the ideal choice to oversee all aspects of the performance.

Jerry Collins, a one-time motorcycle patrol officer who apparently put up most of the money to buy the Beatty equipment. A critical factor in Collins' decision to back the new operations team may have been his long-standing personal and business relationship with McClosky, which dated back at least to the World War II era. To illustrate this point, a brief legal notice in the March 11, 1943, the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* revealed that Collins, McClosky and W. E. Lawson were planning to start up a "transportation business in Sarasota . . . under the fictitious name of Victory Bus Company." [Lawson later would run Ringling-Barnum concessions under McClosky's watch.] This venture, if actualized, would have competed with Concello's existing taxi service in Sarasota, pointed out Fred Pfening Jr.

Randolph Calhoun, often described as "one of Sarasota's most colorful barristers." Independent of his ties to Collins, Calhoun owned considerable properties in the Sarasota area, in addition to establishing realty abstract and title companies in Sarasota and Venice. And, last but certainly not the least,

Clyde Beatty, from a strictly personal standpoint, had the most to lose from the deal being consummated. Junior Ruffin offered a significant insight, based on conversations with the trainer. "When Beatty was no longer the boss, I think he was relieved," opined Ruffin, who later on would follow in his mentor's footsteps as Prince Bogino, the African subjugator of wild beasts. From the time Beatty affixed his signature on the reorganization papers until his death nine years later, he would be a contract performer, albeit a well compensated one. More significantly, Beatty's name would continue to dominate all show advertising, publicity and signage.

Old (Ringling) Hands on Deck

Putting the Beatty outfit back on the road by late August required McClosky and Kernan to focus, simultaneously, on three tasks: First, routing and promoting a 12-week tour from scratch. Second, recruiting an experienced management team to put the moribund circus on the rails. And third, ensuring that the new Clyde Beatty Circus would live up to its billing, in Collins' words, as "the biggest show in the world."

The shock waves set off by Ringling's shutdown in Pittsburgh resonated in Deming, where McClosky had just set up shop, and in Sarasota, where Kernan was positioned to await the arrival of the Ringling trains carrying hundreds newly unemployed performers and workers . While McClosky and Kernan had the cream of the American circus talent at their beck and call, they filled vacancies almost exclusively with people who had previously demonstrated their loyalty on the Big One to accomplish the Herculean task.

The ascendancy of the new management team left Beatty's former general manager, Frank Orman, handling lesser duties as legal adjustor and front-door superintendent. [Orman resumed GM responsibilities several years later.]

On the operations side, Bob Reynolds, who had given Kernan his first job as a prop hand in 1927, stayed on as lot superintendent. George Werner stepped into the boss canvasman's shoes. Otis Leslie took over train ops. David

"Deacon" Blanchfield became transportation superintendent for the small fleet of Beatty trucks and tractors.

Compared to the mammoth circus they had left, the hibernating show was a dwarf. No matter how impressive their credentials were in managing the movement and set up of the Greatest Show on Earth, they still lacked a competent work force. Most laborers had dropped off Beatty circus when it closed at Burbank, pointed out Junior Ruffin.

Fortunately, the situation was not so daunting in the ticket wagon. Beatty's chief accountant, William Petty, provided financial continuity as treasurer. Mrs. Edna Antes joined as the all-important ticket auditor.

Overriding consideration, however, was given to establishing a solid string of dates that would sustain the show en route to its intended final destination, Sarasota . McClosky couldn't have found a better man for the job than Floyd King, who was without question the most knowledgeable and capable circus general agent in America. King already had experienced the closing of two circuses that season—his own King Bros. and that of Ringling-Barnum, which ironically had shut down within days after King showed up on the Big One. A team of Beatty contracting agents hit the road on August 4 and within the next two weeks had signed commitments to route the show through Texas.

Moving with equal speed was the newly assembled publicity corps, headed by Ed Howe, who had accumulated a massive contact list of media editors and writers from his tub thumping on the Ringling, Cole and Beatty shows. Roland Butler, the dean of Ringling publicists, was retained as a consultant, designing new advertisements and other promotional materials from his Bradenton home.

To illustrate the accelerated pace of preparatory footwork, the show was able to make its first round of media visits as early as July 23, less than two weeks after McCloskey and Kernan put their signatures on the pact. Spirits of local circus fans most likely were boosted by this story in the Albuquerque *Tribune:* "The Clyde Beatty Circus, under new management, will open its season in Albuquerque with performances August 31 and September 1, under auspices of the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Posse, it was announced today.

"Dean Moore, circus advertising director, said the big tent will be set up on the Highland High School grounds. Advance sale of children's tickets will begin tomorrow. . . .

"The Clyde Beatty Circus, recently purchased by a group of officials of the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus which closed last week in Pittsburgh, will feature many of the performers who appeared with the Ringling show.

"A feature of the circus will be the animal training act of Clyde Beatty, former owner of the show. The show also will feature a menagerie including 15 elephants and 35 lions and tigers."

The later statement was an exaggeration, of course.

Big One Strands "Alien Acts"

The promotion of Ringling acts on the new and improved Beatty show was no flight of fancy. Just before Walter Kernan left the Tampa airport on July 25 to join his partner in Deming, he told the Sarasota *Journal* that the new consortium " 'will pick up the circus schedule where Ringling left off' and will hire nearly half of the stranded alien acts from Ringling."

Next-day coverage by the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* accentuated the plight of the imported troupers: "Aiding Kernan in lining up foreign acts is Noyelles D. Burkhart, who resigned Wednesday night [July 26] as legal advisor. Burkhart termed his sudden resignation 'a mutual matter. . . .' Since his arrival here last Friday [July 20] aboard the third section of the Ringling train, Burkhart has sought to resolve the tangled problems of foreign personnel left destitute by the halt in the Ringling tour.

Water truck pulling cookhouse supply wagon No. 31

"Immediately after his arrival, he began conferences with A. J. Mixon, U. S. immigration officer in Tampa, but Burkhart said Mixon claimed he could give him no help unless John Ringling North, circus president, stated what intentions he has toward fulfilling bonded commitments to provide passage home for the aliens. . . .

"At the principal immigration office in Miami [the] inspector in charge said he had received no official information on the circus alien problem. He said, however, that North has bonds posted for only 18 of approximately 80 aliens in this country to work with the circus. Each bond is in the amount of $500."

The immigration issue was one of many on North's plate, but it was yet another example of the toxic fallout from his decision to jerk the circus off the rails and to eliminate the big top.

The newly imported department heads at Beatty's Deming quarters were more intent on balancing the available resources with the ambitious goals of fielding a larger, better circus.

For example, the *Billboard* on August 14 reported that executives were giving thought to increasing the capacity of the train from 15 to 20 cars. With the start date already publicized nationally, pragmatism trumped what appeared initially to be a very viable alternative. That didn't prevent press agents from declaring that two Beatty circus trains would be needed to pull 20 brightly painted cars into today's town.

Facing an even more pressing dress rehearsal on August 28, the winter quarters team had little choice but make do with the resources on site. To shoehorn the growing outfit into the existing train, however, meant that some props and people would have to be reshuffled, eliminated or forced to

travel overland. This meant eliminating the free menagerie and incorporating its four-legged occupants—Beatty's big cats among them—into the side show of which Harry L. Jones was the new manager, replacing Charlie Cox. The kids' show canvas, as before, would be trucked between lots. In addition, the anticipated increase in the numbers of performers and working men would tax the available space in the train's three coaches. That provided some troupers and department heads, like elephant superintendent Shipley, a Beatty holdover, the incentive to make the jumps in their own trucks and trailers.

Once the show was back on the road, "McCloskey and Kernan didn't live on the train," Ruffin said. "They drove their Chevy station wagons and stayed in hotels the last 12 weeks we were out."

Clyde Beatty working his cats in the Deming quarters, Dave Price collection.

The magnitude of changes afoot hit home to the surviving band of Beatty workers on the arrival of a caravan of busses, trucks and trailers at the Deming fairgrounds on the weekend before the scheduled dress rehearsal. Out stepped a bevy of briefly unemployed Ringling performers and support personnel from Sarasota. Among them were Count Nicholas, ringmaster on the Big One, replacing equestrian director John Cline, whose liberty horse act had been decimated to feed Beatty's big cats; Justino Loyal and the Loyal-Repinski troupe; and the Saber Jets, boasting Juan Rodriquez's triple somersault. Tommy Clarke was the prop boss.

Holdovers from the first Beatty tour of 1956, in addition to the show's namesake and his cage crew, included Herbie Weber, "the Great Herberto," slide-for-life wire act; the Escalantes, spotlighting Weber's wife, Chata Escalante, on the high wire; Colleen Alpaugh, fronting a trio of Beatty elephants; and clowns Eddie Dullum, Bill Brickle and Merlin "Shorty" Hinkle. Joining clown alley were Lou Nagy, Dennis Stevens, Jimmy Armstrong, Balila, Cueto and Cha Cha Morales.

Rally 'round the Big Top

"Beatty Circus Plans Free Deming Show." That was the good news on the front page of the August 19 *Headlight*. "As a token of their appreciation for the kindness and cooperation of the people of Deming and Luna County, the performers and other personnel of the Clyde Beatty Circus will give a free performance at a dress rehearsal on Tuesday evening at 7 p.m., August 28."

The potentially bad news followed: "The only outdoor circus in the United States will then hit the road for a grand tour which will end in Sarasota, Florida, in November."

More than 4,000 towners turned out to witness what must have been a confusing and unintended comedy of errors at the Deming fairgrounds as the Beatty regulars and Ringling expatriates attempted to adjust to ever-changing ring routines. New music director Raymond Aguilar, replacing Vic Robbins, and his 10-piece band struggled to keep pace with the mix of cues for acts they previously had not accompanied.

"It was very hard to mesh the two shows," Ruffin said. "Everybody from Ringling thought they were much better."

With only two days between the Deming teardown and the unofficial opening at Las Cruces, the combined crews loaded the train, which most Ringling folk considered both tiny and primitive compared to their former 80-car rail fleet, and signaled the final departure from the old air base. The *Headlight* in its August 31 edition reflected on what to Deming circus loyalists must have been a somber occasion: "If you were in the vicinity of the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot last Wednesday morning [August 29] about 7 o'clock, you probably noted with a nostalgic air a long line of yellow circus cars heading east, and if you happened to be a frequent visitor on the downtown streets you will miss quite a number of familiar faces for the last of the big, big circuses has hit the road and it is a long, long road for more than 700 personnel of the Clyde Beatty Circus. . . .

"Their season will end in November and Mr. Beatty has promised that they shall return to Deming.

"We shall be looking forward to seeing those familiar yellow railroad cars on the siding again and seeing those many friends who are now on the sawdust trail giving joy and entertainment to kids from six to sixty."

What many Deming folks failed to comprehend was the fact that Beatty was no longer in position to make any commitments on behalf of the circus management.

Performance Shakedown

Switching from the Southern Pacific to the Santa Fe line in the Deming yards, the circus train headed east for the 60-mile jump to Las Cruces, which was tacked on the front end of the new route to make the show more roadworthy. Eddie Howe's press crew, strengthened with the last-minute addition of veteran promoter Howard Y. Bary, had already started the flow of publicity and advertising to the accommodating media outlets.

On August 29, the Las Cruces *Sun-News* reported that "a special vanguard of field agents known as '24-hour men' were in Las Cruces today for the long, gleaming steel train bringing the huge all-new Clyde Beatty Circus to town for its world premiere.

"The special crew . . . are charged with plotting the circus lot (the cotton compress show grounds) where the acres of canvas will mushroom into a tented city housing some 700 people and hundreds of animals from all parts of the world.

"They are busily engaged in making arrangements for the delivery early tomorrow morning of meats, vegetables, fruits, dairy products and the mountainous stacks of hay needed for the zoo.

"These above items [are] in addition to tons of sawdust shavings and fuel the circus' fleet of diesel trucks and tractors used to transport the heavy wagons to the circus lots from the trains. These were all purchased weeks ago by other agents known as contracting agents."

Following the train's arrival Wednesday morning and yet another ragged set-up, the cast endured a second dress rehearsal that night in preparation for a twin-pack of paying performances on Thursday, August 30.

The Beatty big top in 1956.

The shakedown was only partially successful. In an August 31 critique, the *Sun-News* pointed to numerous problems that plagued the circus, some of which the newspaper was more than willing to chalk off to first-day confusion: "Overflow crowds exacerbated the situation, especially for the evening tome. The performance was delayed for an hour before it got underway with seats being brought in to accommodate those standing...

"Certainly a little more organization and a larger staff were needed for handling the crowds, the reserve seats as well as to work the three rings. . . .

"Timing was definitely off on some of the acts and the entire show needs to be better synchronized."

The sponsoring Las Cruces Jaycees, who netted $1,500 for a community project, got caught in the middle by "the usual complaints regarding service and tax charges on passes, as well as the complaints for reserve seats. [B]ut the fact was pointed out that reserve seats are always the same price as the general admission price." (Beatty ads priced general admission tickets at $1.35 for adults and 75 cents for children.)

Yet, the article concluded, "Kernan [and] McClosky were with Ringling many years and are convinced the public still wants the old fashioned circus under the tent."

Their premise proved correct.

Picking Up Momentum

After having to cancel a matinee because of late arrival in Albuquerque for the "official" opening on Friday, August 31, the enhanced Beatty show attracted a full house on Friday night and added a third performance on Saturday, September 1, to meet the demand for tickets.

From the very outset of the reorganized tour, as McClosky later told John Pugh, "they did nothing but business all the way in."

Initial reports from the route substantiated this claim and confirmed the need for enforcements. On September 6, one week into the tour, the *Sarasota Journal* issued this report: "The Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus, whose president and board chairman John Ringling North cancelled its 1956 schedule, saw the once-defunct Clyde Beatty Circus draw capacity crowds this week in its revival.

"That's the gist of information received here yesterday by Randolph Calhoun, co-owner of Beatty equipment from Frank McClosky, former Ringing official and Beatty general manager.

"McClosky told Calhoun audiences have been enthusiastic and the circus has been accorded free publicity by Texas newspapers. The circus played in Plainview yesterday and shows in Lubbock today.

"Additional workers who left Sarasota by bus to join the circus in Texas have arrived and are on the job, Calhoun was informed."

According to a route list compiled by circus historian E. W. Adams, the show played to packed houses at most stops along the recently abandoned Ringling route. Following a one-day stand in Fort Worth on September 12, the Beatty outfit drew capacity crowds in Dallas during a four-day stand at the state fairgrounds.

Moving on down to San Antonio for a two-day engagement beginning September 20, the circus was showing the effects of its demanding route, as indicated by a September 21 [Friday] account in the San Antonio *Express;* "Thursday afternoon's performance started about an hour and a half later than scheduled due to a late start getting out of Austin plus a railroad schedule mix up which was noticed too late to call off an afternoon matinee for hundreds of orphans and crippled children.

"Beatty and his circus team, arriving in San Antonio about four hours late, pitched in and put out a fine show considering the bottleneck."

Even in smaller towns, the show built on its new-found success. On September 26 at Freeport, for example, "more than 13,000 Bazosporters saw the big show and all three performances were played to capacity crowds," noted the Brazosport *Facts* newspaper.

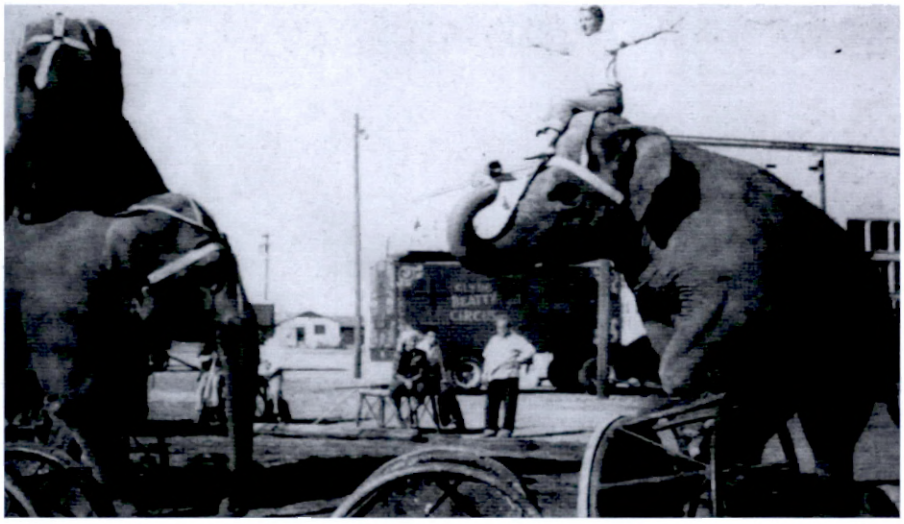
But sloppy advance work and rail snafus were difficult to overcome, as the *Galveston News* reported the day after the show's September 27 appearance: "The matinee performance, scheduled to begin at 3 p.m., did not get under way until 5 p.m. after the circus troupe experienced railroad delays in reaching Galveston.

"Scheduled to arrive in Galveston at daybreak, the circus did not reach here until about noon. Another delay occurred here when it was discovered the circus had not posted a required bond with the city.

"After much discussion, the matter was settled, and the show was allowed to go on. . . . The circus played to a good crowd in the afternoon and was filled to capacity Thursday night.

'The night show was marred by an accident in which a famous bareback rider was slightly injured when he fell from a horse and apparently hit a ring post.

"The rider, Justino Loyal, was not badly hurt, according to circus officials. He was not admitted to any of the three local hospitals. . . . The circus had about ten clowns dishing



The elephant act working in the Deming quarters, ticket wagon in background. Dave Price collection.

out the latest in buffoonery and they were mighty good at their job.

"Beatty, Mr. Circus Himself, held the crowd in suspense with his thrilling wild animal act in the huge steel arena. . . The battle between man and beast is a thrilling spectacle for the circus lover."

At its next stop, Houston, the Beatty tome ran into a problem that Ringling-Barnum's tented versions had been encountering with increasing frequency—the lack of good locations in metropolitan areas. Historian Adams noted the absence of local transportation to the lot, which was nine miles out of downtown Houston, during the three-day stand.

Beatty Still a Big Draw

That these intermittent problems did not diminish the show's flash and fans' enjoyment was evident from excerpts of the *Billboard's* October 27 review of a performance at Memphis: "Wardrobe is nice throughout the show.

"Four lady principal acts work side rings for good picture effect and personnel is from the Loyal-Repenski Famiy act.

"Clyde Beatty has the third spot. He works four tigers and 10 lions in the big center arena. There are barrel rolls, spinning, rollovers, fence jumping and plenty of snarling and action. . . . And let there be no question that Beatty works a good act hard, getting top results in an action-packed routine. . . .

"The big elephant display is supervised by Dick Shipley, elephant superintendent and Colleen Alpaugh is among those working the bulls. There are three big ones in each side ring and three small ones in the center. . . They climax with a walking long mount that closes the show after an hour and a half."

If the reviewer had been looking closely, he might have spotted a young black man working a trio of elephants in one of the side rings. That was Junior Ruffin, who was expanding his animal handling experience, with his mentor's cautious approval.

After barnstorming the South, the circus came to the end of its second tour, lasting 12-weeks and two day and covering 5,874 rail miles.

"Today is Circus Day in 'Circus City,'" the Sarasota morning paper proclaimed on November 20, "with Clyde Beatty's three-ring extravaganza opening at the Fairgrounds for performances at 3 and 8 p.m. The train carrying the 150 men and women arenic stars and tons of canvas, grease paint, props, is scheduled to arrive at the Seaboard depot between 7 and 7:30 this morning."

Unemployed Ringling kinkers were among the spectators jamming the tent at both performances. Many were brought to tears when Ray Aguilar's band played the traditional season-ending "Auld Lang Syne."

The trip to DeLand marked the end of the show's decade on rails. For Clyde Beatty, it was likely a bittersweet moment, knowing that his name was preserved on the marquee but also perhaps mourning his loss of ownership.

Many Ringling-turned-Beatty circus performers reopened their homes in Sarasota. Richard Shipley left his post as Beatty's elephant superintendent to accept Art Concello's offer to return to Ringling Bros. Concello also recruited Charlie Smith, who had joined the Beatty tour in its last six weeks of railroading, to help retool Ringling-Barnum for highway travel in 1957.

DeLand's Gain, Deming's Loss

Deming's once-prized circus never returned to its New Mexico wintering spot. At the close of the 1956 season, the Luna County fair board dinged the Beatty show for $500 in damages to buildings it had recently vacated at the air base.

Many of Beatty's circus treasures vanished in smoke at the former winter quarters on January 4, 1958. "A spectacular pre-dawn fire raced through an old barracks building," the AP reported. "Within an hour the 50- by 80-foot building had been reduced to ashes, with only a masonry chimney remaining. . . . It contained relics of old circus days which Beatty had collected over the years. Beatty had intended to establish a circus museum from the relics."

On January 9, 1957 the Deming *Headlight* reported that the fire's origin was still a mystery, but that village authorities intended to collect on a $10,000 insurance policy for the burnt-out structure, half of that amount being carried in the circus's name. Beatty was also insured "to some extent" on the contents, which were not identified.

None of the Beatty personnel apparently made Deming their permanent home. One circus alumnus, Johnny Cline, returned for a brief visit in early 1958. Having lost his show-owned liberty horses, the trainer was refocusing on his latest acquisition, Dell, a 20-month-old elephant purchased for $4,000 from the Jungle Compound at Thousand Oaks. After leaving Deming, Cline was set to rejoin his former boss on the Beatty-Hamid circus at Palisades, New Jersey.

Today, few people in Deming remember the three winters and that fateful summer of 1956 when the Clyde Beatty Circus made the old air base its off-season home.

And Junior Ruffin is one of only a few who can still cut up jackpots about rattlesnakes, buzzards and those cold, blustery winters in Southern New Mexico.

We Divided the Job—but Stuck Together

By John Ringling

of the Ringling Brothers

This article appeared in the September 1919 issue of The American Magazine.

Each brother had his part, and the others let him alone. We also discovered many interesting things about the likes and dislikes of people who go to the circus.

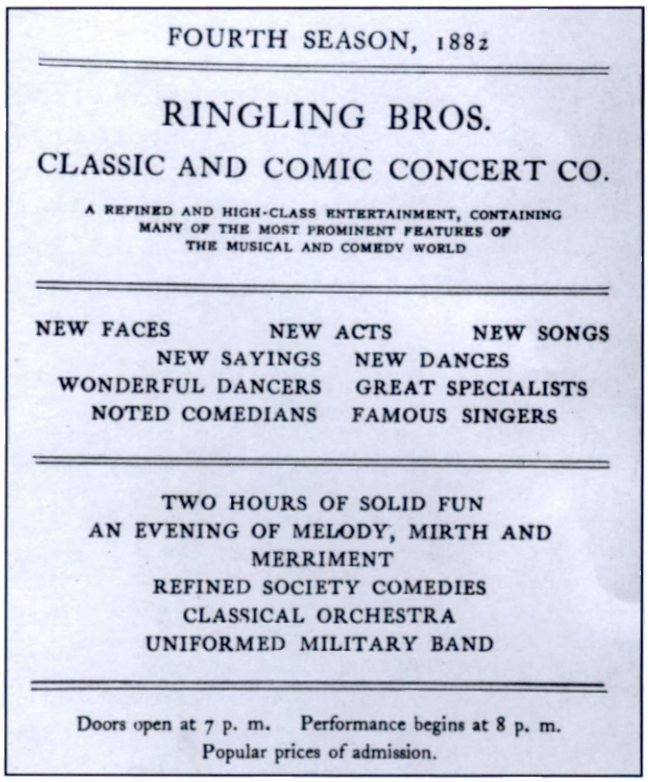
Team work and strict attention to every detail of the circus business has been the key to the success of the Ringling Brothers; that, and hard work, common honesty, and a close study of what the public wants, comprise all the trade secrets we have to reveal.

If there is anything in our lives or in our business that might help others, I am willing to tell it. What we know we have learned from others, and I am willing to give them back the benefit. Our education has been in the school of experience and necessity, and in the primary grades we had stern teachers. Perhaps it is well to explain that the older brothers educated the younger. Whatever credit is due probably consists in the fact that we had common sense enough to profit by the experience of all, rather than of one.

I do not know that in the beginning we had any theories or philosophy, or even any very definite plan. We lived in a small town, and had few opportunities to study amusements; yet I cannot recall when we were not giving shows or practicing for them, trying to learn everything, from musical turns to equestrian acts. We held shows in barns, in tents, and vacant rooms. We worked hard at music, learning to play, after a fashion, upon every instrument we could acquire, as our first idea of entertainment was the concert. We had no real musical education, but "picked it up." However,

John Ringling

The program of the Classic and Comic Concert Co. 1882.



FOURTH SEASON, 1882

RINGLING BROS.

CLASSIC AND COMIC CONCERT CO.

A REFINED AND HIGH-CLASS ENTERTAINMENT, CONTAINING MANY OF THE MOST PROMINENT FEATURES OF THE MUSICAL AND COMEDY WORLD

NEW FACES NEW ACTS NEW SONGS
NEW SAYINGS NEW DANCES
WONDERFUL DANCERS GREAT SPECIALISTS
NOTED COMEDIANS FAMOUS SINGERS

TWO HOURS OF SOLID FUN
AN EVENING OF MELODY, MIRTH AND MERRIMENT
REFINED SOCIETY COMEDIES
CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA
UNIFORMED MILITARY BAND

Doors open at 7 p. m. Performance begins at 8 p. m.
Popular prices of admission.

love of music was inherent, and two of my brothers, Charles and Alf T., became accomplished musicians in later life. We started out as a concert troupe of boys, going to neighboring towns. All five of us played in the orchestra, four playing while the other in turn ascended the stage and did some act, such as juggling, tumbling, or singing. We called it the "Classic Concert Company," but soon changed to "Ringling Brothers Comedy Concert Co." Even that early we discovered that there is something in a name, and that the public's chief desire is to be amused rather than uplifted.

Our big ambition was to own a circus, with beautiful horses. We loved horses in childhood. Circus paraphernalia, however, is expensive, and we were several years in acquiring sufficient apparatus and stock to start with a road show. Meantime we were working hard, being compelled to learn not only the acts but also the business part of such an enterprise—and the business part proved the harder; it is surprising to me, in looking backward, to recall the confidence with which we tackled anything and did it. We learned that Franklin was right when he said that if you want a thing done well do it yourself. We tried hiring professional agents, and the result at first was not happy. We discovered the importance of team work, and that the hired agents would not pull together the way we brothers did. We learned that life is give and take, and that giving really is the bigger part.

In forty years, Ringling Brothers never have quarreled except that they have had some fine, old, brotherly rows over matters of

ALFRED T. RINGLING

JOHN RINGLING

CHARLES RINGLING

The Ringling Brothers, sons of a harness maker in McGregor, Iowa have become the world's greatest showmen. They dominate the business, owning the Ringling, the Barnum and Bailey, and the Forepaugh-Sells circuses.

Originally, there were seven of the Ringling Brothers: John, Al, Otto, Alf T, Charles, Henry and A. G. None of the family had any experience or knowledge in the show business; but Al, the eldest boy, especially, and John, Otto, Alf T., and Charles seem to have been born showmen. They gave entertainments and "shows" in barns, in improvised tents, in halls, when they were children. Al trained the younger boys almost as soon as they learned to walk, especially in instrumental music. They went out as a concert troupe before some of them had reached their teens. From the first it was teamwork that made them succeed. They worked hard, and each bore his share of the burden. Each had his special duties; but all played in the orchestra, and while four would play, the other would rush to the stage to do his act.

Possibly the most remarkable feature of the family has been their division of the work, which has developed each one along different lines.

John became the route agent, and knows America as we know the front hall at home; Alf T. assumed charge of publicity, and knows practically every newspaper man in the United States; Charles had charge of "opposition," and of advance billing, the man who made a new language on the bill boards; Al was the producer, who chose the acts and directed the performance; Otto was the financial man, and at his death he bequeathed his part of the shows to Henry. A. G. died early in his career.

When the Ringlings acquired the Barnum and Bailey show John and Alf T. took charge of them, while Charles and Al remained with Ringling show, Upon the death of Al, Charles assumed full charge, until the recent combine of the two great shows, which reunited the brothers. Only three of the brothers remain, John, Charles and Alf T.

policy, not one of which ever left a bad feeling, because we understood that each was thinking and working for the interests of all.

One thing which we agreed upon early was that majority rule should not prevail in all cases. We never believed that any three should ever force their dictates upon two. Often, if only one held out for an idea to which the other four were opposed, we would argue and try to convince that one; but if he insisted, we agreed to try his plan. The verdict usually was "All right. We think you're wrong, but if you insist, we'll try it."

If the plan succeeded we gave him the credit, and if it failed we said nothing about it. Not all have succeeded, but some of the biggest improvements and advances we have made have been the result of trying out some idea which, at first, the majority opposed.

The first big question we encountered was that of honesty. This may sound odd, but remember that we were green country boys going into a business which, at that time, was notorious. The grafter and pickpocket were parts of circus life. Many shows carried organized bands of such criminals to prey upon the people, and clashes between circus and townspeople were frequent. We determined from the first upon two policies—strict honesty, decent behavior and neatness; in fact we spent a large part of our small capital for neat uniforms. Being honest was a matter of conviction rather than of policy. I doubt whether we realized the commercial worth of honesty and good reputation, but we all hated crooks and were determined to

A 1919 poster.

Poster used in 1919. Ringling Art Museum, Tibbals Digital collection.

We were growing, accumulating stock and equipment and enlarging our traveling territory, producing a clean, high-class one-night circus, five of us taking active part in the performances or the management. We had grown large enough for the big circuses to notice us, but we had no idea what a storm of opposition our stand for honesty would bring upon us. The grafters came to join the show, and we drove them off the lots. They started to fight us and had the aid of some of the great circuses. We were branded as "The Sunday-school Show." The big circuses attached our routes, sent crews to harass us, and the grafters spread hand bills over towns, headed "When thieves fall out," declaring that we were opposing them because they refused to pay us a larger share of their loot.

We capitalized their opposition and discovered that it was one of the most valuable bits of advertising we ever had. We discovered that we were getting a better class of workers with the show, more loyalty from them, and better work and appearance. Also, we discovered that we were welcome to play return engagements, and that our reputation for honesty made us welcome in opposition territory, where other shows were not liked because of their grafting methods. In other words, it worked out with us just as it does in any business.

The show was growing to be a large enterprise, and while at first we were jacks-of-all trades, able to do almost anything, from leading the band to doing an equestrian act, it became necessary to specialize and divide the work. We were some time adjusting ourselves and learning which of us was best fitted for certain departments. It may seem a large problem, yet with us it was simple: each of us took over the line of work he liked best; and it succeeded, because any man does better when he likes his work.

This specialization, of course, developed us along different lines. Each assumed absolute control of his own department, and the others neither questioned nor criticized, unless asked for an opinion.

If I may be pardoned for seeming boastful, I should like to say that, in my opinion, Al was the greatest producing showman the world ever has known. He knew instinctively what the public would like or dislike, and his big success was in his ability to choose good features. In our earlier days, before we could afford to pay for the high-class attractions, we were, of course, handicapped, especially in the face of bitter and relentless opposition by the richer shows. All clung to the idea of neatness, clean performances and fast movement. In the circus business he had the idea of speed and "pep" which George M. Cohan brought into the theatres. With a dozen rather mediocre acts, by proper staging, by "doubling," and keeping the action fast and continuous, he made the show appear better than some of those which cost twice as much to stage. He invented, brightened up, and developed some of the most successful features known to the circus.

It is a joke among the youngsters who love to try to "kid" us old fellows that, because of long experience in routing, I can put my hand out of a car window at night, feel the air, and say, "Six and a half miles from Abilene," while Al frequently was known to inquire what city we were in after the tents were up. There is truth in the joke. Each man concentrated upon his own work and "kept off" the others; consequently each man dug in and learned his own work thoroughly. My training was largely in routing, and in the old opposition days, when shows fought for territory, and when the big fellows tried to starve us out, knowledge of railroads and routes was a big help. I learned my geography that way; and Charles still insists that I am able to name the counties of any state in the United States and, if a county is named, to name the county seat, the road leading to it, and the license fee.

In what we refer to as the "opposition" days, circus life was full of thrills. It was real warfare against powerful enemies, a fight for existence on our part. After we began to grow and develop our new policy of honesty and clean shows, the big fellows fought us hard, routing their larger shows over our territory, destroying our billing, and carrying on a "campaign of frightfulness." Charles had charge of "opposition" and as a tactician he seldom was beaten.

One of their favorite means of "knocking" was to slip into our parade a "perambulator," a wagon with large signs announcing that we were a nice little show, but to wait for the big show next week. It was a constant fight to prevent the perambulator from getting into our parade, and Charles was a genius at such prevention. Once he quietly spread the word over a town that he would give a five-dollar gold piece for each nut off the perambulator; when it started to join our parade that perambulator fell to pieces like the one-horse shay. On another occasion some of our men greased saws, and sawed its timbers, so that at the first heavy jolt it collapsed in a heap. Another time, the opposition hid the wagon out

A Barnum and Bailey poster from 1917 with Ringling title pasted on top. Ringling Art Museum, Tibbals Digital collection.

in the country. Charles learned which road it would take, and fixed a bucket of green paint with a hose and force pump under a bridge. When the wagon started to cross it our men pumped and squirted paint until all the lettering was obliterated.

Incidentally, such unfair fighting never profited the opposition to any great extent. In fact, it aroused sentiment in our favor. It is a question in my mind now whether it would not have been better policy to permit the perambulator to parade with us, and rely upon the sense of fair play of the American public. It is hard to see it in that light, however, when you are fighting for existence.

This experience had its effect upon us: When Ringling Brothers came to be the big show, we went to the other extreme and decided that it was best for ourselves and for the good of the entire business to encourage every circus that was clean and inclined to follow our policy of honest dealing with the public. We even aided in supplying them with acts, and in rearranging routing so that we would not conflict seriously to their detriment, and, in return, many of them have helped us by developing new acts and by lifting the standard of the business.

The psychology of the circus really is simple: Our appeal is to the elemental instincts, to the child that is in every man. What they call "the lure of the circus" is merely the great, unexpressed yearning of every human being to be young again. The circus is a drop of water from Ponce de Leon's spring. It takes people back to childhood for two hours, and makes them boys and girls again, makes them forget as nothing else will do. This fact accounts for many seemingly contradictory features of the circus. The humorists make fun of the man who borrows a small boy to take to the circus; to us in the business this is not funny. We see two things in it—the universal protest against growing old and the desire to give pleasure to others. A man or a woman enjoys the circus because the child enjoys it. Their great pleasure is in giving the child pleasure. The great pleasure of a circus man is that he gives pleasure to others.

Men and women approach a circus in the spirit of throwing away age, and becoming the child for an hour or two. You never see men dress up to go to a circus; they put on their old clothes. Many of them would pay ten dollars for the privilege of crawling under the canvas; they are coming to revive childhood memories and pleasures. The grown man is our best press agent and publicity man; the supposedly sedate head of the house is the first to see the circus posters. The first thing, when he reaches home, he tells the kiddies that the circus is coming to town; he tells them of the circuses he saw when he was a boy; how he crawled out of the bedroom window, shinned down the porch pillar, and went out to the junction to meet the circus train; how he carried water to the elephants to get in; how he crawled under the canvas one time.

That man is going to the circus, and he is going to take the kiddies—his own or someone else's, and he is going because the circus, of all forms of amusement, appeals to the elemental in man. I have been asked what things appeal to people in different parts of the country. The answer is that what appeals to the public in New York strikes just as close to the hearts of the people of Oklahoma.

Among our best patrons are the Chinese and the Indians, and they are pleased by the same things. The negro of the South enjoys the clowns; he shows the child mind most clearly. The Indians and Chinese appear stolid and do not express their emotions; but deeds of skill and horses appeal to them most. I remember one experience with Indians in Oklahoma. One of the rich chiefs reserved seats for his entire tribe, and he hired every vehicle in the town to haul them to the circus. He even got the town hearse, placed a rocking chair inside, and, sitting in the chair, led the procession,

A former Barnum and Bailey poster with the Ringling title on top for the 1919 season. Cincinnati Art Musem collection.

which outrivaled ours.

In recent years, I have been asked often whether the circus will be modernized, whether the universal use of the automobile will change it. It never will be changed to any great extent, because men and women will always long to be young again. There is as much chance of Mother Goose or Andersen's Fairy Tales going out of style as the circus altering greatly. If we desired to change it, the people would not permit it.

Clowns, elephants, pretty ladies in fluffy gowns riding white horses. That is the circus!

You are not convinced? Watch a father when he breaks the news to his little son that the circus is coming. He takes him on his knee and tells the news. The boy is excited. He wants to hear all about the circus. What does his father tell him he will see?

Clowns. That is first. The elephants—g-r-e-a-t *big* elephants. Pretty ladies riding white horses.

So while there are children, the circus will be clowns, elephants, and pretty ladies on white horses. We may bring in other attractions—the thrillers, the pomp and parades, the amazing feats of skill and daring to please others; but without clowns, elephants, and pretty ladies on white horses it would not be the circus, or the real American amusement.

The elephants, of course, are the great animal attraction. It is because they are big, and bigness appeals to the child mind; they are bigger to a child than they are to a grown person, largely, I think, because a boy three feel tall, looking up at the huge animal, sees it at an angle that makes it appear larger than it really is. Elephants excite a kind of awed admiration; tigers, the sense of smoothness, stealth; lions, the respect of majesty.

The chief interest in animals, after the elephants, is in the sea lions, which arouse amazed admiration by their seemingly human intelligence. Just what the psychology of this appeal of the sea lion to the human is I am uncertain—surprise and amazement, I believe. We know, however, that the seals are great centers of interest, and that people never grow tired of watching their tricks.

Monkeys, are, and always will be, the chief attraction to the children and to human beings with the child type of mind. It is much the same appeal as that of a baby.

As to horses, there exists in the human mind a love and admiration for the horse that is almost beyond comprehension. There is

Originally a 1916 Barnum & Bailey poster, the Ringling title was added in 1919. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

some psychic connection between the human and the equine animal, which is perhaps inherited. I have found but one class lacking in this love of the horse, and they are certain people in New York; upon inquiry I learned that in their native land the horse is practically unknown. Quite recently, a returned officer of artillery in whose command were many of these people, informed me that they would as lief go into a cage of lions as into a corral filled with horses. Not knowing the horse, they fear it.

It is largely because of this universal love of horses that Ringling Brothers have opposed the idea of motorizing the circus. Looking further, we know that, within a short time, the horse will be almost as much of a curiosity to the public as the giraffe was a generation ago. Do you realize how few of the new generation ever have seen a four- or six-horse team? Our circus horses, which of course are selected with the greatest care, are almost as much of an attraction, either in a city or in the country, as are the rare animals collected from all over the world to form the educational feature of the shows.

Besides that, we do not believe that people want to see machinery in motion when they come to a circus. They want the "human interest." If they love machinery, they will go to a mechanical exhibit. They want to see big, sweaty, brawny men performing feats, whether of strength or of skill and daring; the crowds which watch the erection of the big "top" would be disappointed if the poles and canvas were to be lifted by machinery; they gather to watch and admire the skill and strength of men.

People come to a circus in a mood different from that in which they approach any other amusement, possibly excepting baseball; circus crowds are proverbially the best-natured in the world, for men and women who come to a circus leave all care and worry at home. They are kids again—excited, good-natured, seeking a chance to laugh either at the show or at each other. All the jostling, the rough handling, the pushing, the jamming, and discomforts are part of the day's fun. They are kids again, and no kid objects to being jostled or jammed in a crowd. They will scramble at the ticket wagon, fight to reach the entrance, laugh at torn clothes and wilted collars. If the doorkeeper grabs a man and shoves him down the right passage, he does not get mad. At a theatre he would want to fight; but at a circus he grins. It is because he is playing boy again for a few hours.

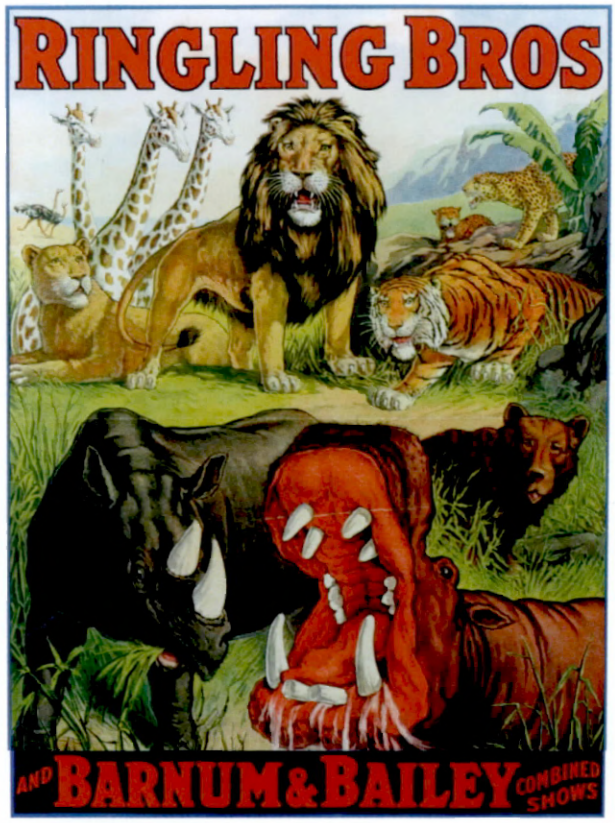
In the performance you will discover, if you analyze the acts, that in practically everything the circus man is playing to this child-interest in grown people. We understand that men and women are there to forget care, and therefore strive to avoid anything that might tend to suggest anything unpleasant or bring back any sorrowful memories. No act that might suggest accident or injury is permitted.

You may recall that for years the circuses strove to secure the woman came to breaking his or her neck the higher the salary.

Now you may observe that, to a great extent, the dangerous abd seemingly dangerous cts have been cut out. This is because we disc0vered that at the climax of such acts four out of fivr of the womem and children turned away their faces and refused to look.

Showmen, whether performers or employees, are a clan apart from all others. We believe they are broader, more liberal, and freer than the average American, and we know that they are

A Ringling poster rehashed to include the Barum title in 1919, Cincinnati Art Museum collection.



intensely American. This is partly due to the rough outdoor life, the hard work, and the absence of temptations to a softer life. Partly, too, it is due to the broadening effect of meeting and seeing hundreds of thousands of people, and unconsciously studying life in many localities. Morally, circus people are perhaps the cleanest class in the world, probably for the same reasons. The life they lead brings them into close, almost family, relations, the boys and girls marry young, and one generation trains the next in the acts.

A half sheet from each title was used together in 1919. Ringling Art Museum, Tibbals Digital collection.

One thing which perhaps would surprise the outsider is the entire absence of any false pride. Their pride in their work is remarkable; but there are no false ideas. This may be partly the results of the old training, when everyone "doubled in brass." They learned to help one another, to do any work that was necessary. The highest paid artist feels not the slightest hesitation about helping with the canvas, or doing any other work, if it is for the good of the show. In a way, a circus becomes a sort of commune, each member trying to help the others. I have seen a man, ballet master of the Metropolitan Opera in winter, but with us in summer, jump into a mudhole and put his shoulder to the wheel of a mired wagon. Ernie Clark, who perhaps is the greatest aerialist ever developed, head of a family of remarkable performers, holds hoops for the equestrians to leap through. Our highest- paid publicity men do not hesitate to seize stickers or paste pots and work as bill posters, if an emergency demands such work.

Part of this is the result of tradition and training; but we feel, also, that much of it is loyalty to the organization and to us. Our men and women are extremely loyal, and this is probably due to the fact that we have kept close to them, and are sincerely interested in them and their welfare. In fact, I think that a great bulk of all labor troubles could be eliminated if employers kept closer in contact with their workers. Employers should have an interest in those associated with them, and when workers feel that the boss really likes them, and is concerned with their welfare, misunderstandings are avoided.

The respect of the trouper for women is almost beyond belief. It is much of the same spirit that is seen in the Western outdoor man, and probably is the result of knowing so few women intimately. If you were to take the finest lady in the land onto a circus lot and introduce her, say to a boss hostler in rough clothes, and perhaps dirty, he would greet her with a deference and a dignity that would impress her because of its realness.

May I be pardoned for speaking thus of our people? But I feel justified in doing so, because I admire them and know what they are.

The business end of a circus is, of course, vital. The expenses are extremely heavy, especially in these days of high cost. Every detail must be carefully watched; minutes count in huge sums, and efficiency is at a premium in every department. I have heard it remarked that there is a great leakage and extravagance. One expert declared that we waste thousands of dollars on telegrams alone. The truth is that what he calls leakage is not wastage. We have a habit of sending long telegrams running into hundreds of words. It is expensive, but not waste. We send such telegrams to save time and delays. Our business is in constant motion. But beyond saving time, our object is to avoid mistakes. The average person who sends a telegram counts words, and often skeletonizes to save pennies. He takes the risk of not making clear his meaning. We send letters by wire, and if we avoid one such mistake a year it pays.

Another point we long ago settled upon is that, whenever one of the Ringlings employs a person, none of the others will discharge him for any reason. The man who hired him is entirely responsible, and must deal with the situation himself. The acceptance of such complete responsibility has been a good thing for each of us, causing us to exercise more care than perhaps we would have done otherwise; and it certainly has avoided any chances of clashes of authority.

Further than that, we never permit personal likes or dislikes to enter into business relations with our employees. I am conscious that we have violated this in permitting personal *likes* to control our moves sometimes, but *dislikes* do not count. If a man is efficient, is valuable to the organization, and considered the best person available for a certain position, he holds the job.

I have spoken elsewhere of our policy of honest dealing with the public, and perhaps some may criticize the statements, and argue that we are not strictly honest in our advertising, especially on bill boards. Such a charge would be unwarranted. We insist upon honest, and never have—nor ever shall—advertised any attraction that is not shown. But, you may charge, the bill boards exaggerate. That is true, and there is a very simple reason for this: The public likes and demands such exaggeration, and the flamboyant language of the posters fills this demand.

The language of the circus poster is unique. Originally it was the result of opposition shows striving to outdo one another in startling announcements. Charles, who is the greatest scholar in the family, and an authority on words, created a new vocabulary and the style caught public fancy. We understand now, although we did not at the time, that we had struck upon the child-appeal in another form. All children, and all primitive minds, love big words, and love exaggeration. The boy who sees four dogs in the back yard invariably says there are a thousand dogs out there. When he offers to bet, he always wants to bet a hundred million billion dollars. He is not striving to deceive, but to express bigness in his own way.

The circus posters do the same thing: there is no effort to deceive the public—but to express the hugeness of everything in figures that carry the idea. If we have fifty elephants, and say a hundred, it pleases rather than offends. On circus day, everybody wants to think and talk in big figures, because on circus day we are boys and girls again, and we want to believe that there are a hundred million trillion elephants in the parade, and a billion funny clowns, and whole bushels and bushels of beautiful ladies on white horses.

Good Things Whispered Gone

By Lad Moore

"...thy beauty is to me
like those Nicean barks of yore, that gently, o'er a perfum'd sea,
the weary way-worn wanderer bore..."
---Edgar Allan Poe

It wasn't even on a dare. I just up and did it. In the summer of 1959, I hitchhiked to Indiana to link up with a touring circus. It was the same circus that once played in my hometown of Marshall, Texas, and what took place there amidst that sawdust and canvas had captivated me as it would a small child. I asked for a job, promising the show manager I would travel any distance to join the circus the day after school was out. He smiled, trying to conceal his deeply-rooted doubt that we would ever cross paths again.

"Here's our route card," he offered, dragging one from under a stack of playbill posters. "This card shows where we will be day by day, week by week. Look me up."

Accepting the card was like signing a contract. He had done his part in offering me a job; now I must honor the bargain. The third day after school was out, my thumb and I caught up with them in Peru, Indiana.

The circus as viewed from the stands shimmers with grandeur, pomp, and a talent sprinkled with sugary confection. But from the back lot, the view is very different indeed. Traveling with the circus was the hardest, most grueling summer work I ever suffered. It was worse than the worst, including the time I worked for a builder installing fiberglass insulation in 135-degree attics.

I was dubbed "Fustdamay," a nickname for circus rookies who typically joined up around the First of May when the circuses began their tour.

Every morning at sunup the circus moved a hundred miles to the next town, arriving on a lot that was often nothing but mud that we carpeted with hay. We had to erect the tent, install the bleachers, hang the rigging for the acts, disperse the props and set up the side show and animal attractions. We were exhausted by the 2:00 pm matinee, and the evening performance was still five hours away.

When the last show was over, we tore down in perfectly

CARSON & BARNES
Third Largest
Wild Animal
CIRCUS
Featuring
COL. TIM McCOY
'Real Wild West'
HEADQUARTERS: CARSON RANCH, ROUTE 1 HUGO, OKLAHOMA

1959 OFFICIAL ROUTE CARD No. II

	Tenth Week			
Sun. June	21	Mt. Morris	Mich.	00
Mon. June	22	Ithaca	Mich.	60
Tue. June	23	Edmore	Mich.	30
Wed. June	24	Mt. Pleasant	Mich.	38
Thu. June	25	Gladwin	Mich.	40
Fri. June	26	West Branch	Mich.	50
Sat. June	27	Tawas City	Mich.	35
	Eleventh Week			
Sun. June	28	Standish	Mich.	36
Mon. June	29	Vassar	Mich.	54
Tue. June	30	Bad Axe	Mich.	55
Wed. July	I	Marlette	Mich.	38
Thu. July	2	Marine City	Mich.	69
Fri. July	3	Armada	Mich.	29
Sat. July	4	Port Huron	Mich.	34
		TOTAL MILEAGE		3215

A 1959 Carson & Barnes route card.

A Carson & Barnes Circus lot in 1959.

reverse order. Everything was disassembled and tucked back into the trucks. By midnight we were finished and due our reward. We were paid in circus script, a daily promissory note issued by the circus paymaster that could only be cashed in what was called the Pie-Car. The Pie-Car was a concession trailer where the workers ended their long day by downing a soggy pork chop sandwich with beer or a shooter they called a Mickey. Usually the day's chit was squandered there and we ended up broke again. It was marketing genius, that Pie-Car. The day's wages were recycled back to the circus and the weary workers had no means to flee even if they held the urge. There was no choice but to stay another day, with the cycle always repeating.

Interrupting a short sleep, the same red sunup always came again and the caravan of trucks moved out in ordered convoy. With every mile, we prayed for Sunday to come; not to worship, but to bathe. Sunday was the one day the circus rested. Some men who managed to resist the wares of the Pie-Car had enough money to walk into town and split the cost of a cheap hotel room for the day. Here four or five of them bathed and rested on double feather beds instead of elephant hay. For the ones who didn't put any cash aside, bathing took place by happenstance in rivers, streams and lakes. We traded each other our monthly haircuts. I learned that anyone can barber if allowed poetic license with a pair of scissors.

So the routine became rote. But in the course of that summer, some-thing odd happened. We have all heard the trite ex-pression, "He's got sawdust in his veins." It's true. There is something magical about circus life; a transformation – no, a transfusion. Maybe it's the calm predictability of the trouping. Perhaps it's the paint and glitter of a clown's face, being able to count on his permanently-affixed smile on the worst of days. Whatever the source of the elixir, it's unforgettable. Some old troupers say circus life is like childbirth. The rigor and pain are never remembered, only the glee.

Jack Moore and Col. Tim McCoy in 1959.

I made friends easily there. The most special was a black man named Happy Jack Davis, likely one of many chosen aliases. It was said that he was on the run, a common postscript for many of the men. After all, there is no better anonymity than a nameless man moving a hundred miles a day. Happy Jack said he hailed from Ferriday, Louisiana where he developed his talent playing blues and jazz trumpet. Ferriday was famous for its music with the likes of Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggert and Mickey Gilley; genius rock and roll pianists who studied there.

A cage semi-trailer in 1959.

"We all rather the river," Happy Jack said, a reference to the influence of the nearby Mississippi. Happy Jack played in the circus band and sometimes performed for tips in the back lot between shows. He could make his trumpet bleat out both the raucous and the soul. It was part of him, a brass appendage.

I was already a fan of the old west and its stars of stage and screen. The headline act for the circus was Colonel Tim McCoy, a Hollywood cowboy who had perfected a sort of Wild West show that he performed in center ring. He was very good with his pistols and bullwhip. He provided a piece of sagebrush glamour for the awe-struck children with his trick riding, roping and shooting. More than once I heard the owner praise him while quietly complaining about the bullet holes in the top of the tent. It was then I learned that being an excellent target shooter was boosted quite nicely with the use of buckshot in his breaking of the dinner plates tossed into the air.

My circus summer continued and by late August I had shed the title of Fustdamay and had become a chartered roustabout. Now they called me Gymoka, with a definition never offered.

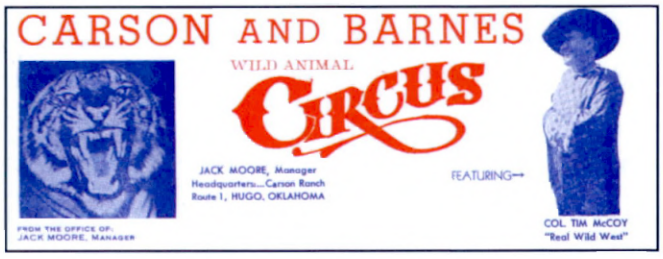
This Gymoka left the lot for the last time after the Saturday matinee in Niles, Michigan. The time had come to hitchhike home for my senior year of high school. As I stood at the entrance to the fairground, I turned around for one last look. The tent-pole banners seemed to be applauding my having stayed the course. The sideshow band was in full swing. Happy Jack was down hard on his trumpet and the strength of his notes stirred the lazy air and gave it dance. Smells of animals and sugar teased my nostrils.

A tear fell from my cheek and made a starburst crater in the dust of my boot. It caused me to recall the famous words of the showman as he bade farewell to his summer's lover: "I love you darlin' but the season's over."

Forty-five years have passed, and I know how the mind's eye archives all things on ageless film. The smell of wet hay mingling with cotton candy can still kindle my spirit to

The marquee and midway in 1959.

roam. So I am not ready for what sits before me in this weedy brown pasture, these hulks of silence that once shouted out such grandeur. For that brief time back then I was part of The Great American Show with its shimmer of beaded costumes and array of painted smiles. But what once may have been a short winter break is now a sleep for all seasons, as rows of rusting machines await a parade that will never come.



Letterhead used in 1959.

I stroll among the carcasses of once-proud wagons, trying to imagine the last day of the Last Circus Summer. The words on those handsome billboards are chalky and faded, but still they manage to whisper the playbill headlines: Liveliest Show under the Big Top! and See Jumbo! Largest Pachyderm in Captivity! Now the field I stand on is emptied of life, save for buzzing wasps and unseen serpents. There is not so much as a lone watchman left to protest this tiny square of rotting canvas I take.

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ERRATA

The Carson & Barnes Circus opened the 1959 season in Paris, Texas on April 15. The show again featured Col. Tim McCoy, western movie star. Dave Hoover's wild animal act was also featured. Jack Moore and D. R. Miller were the owners, with Moore the manager. The two had operated the Tex Carson Circus from 1951 to 1956. The title was changed in 1957 to Carson & Barnes.

The circus moved on 15 show owned trucks. New to the show was an 80-foot big top with three 30-foot middles. The midway contained a stage coach ride; Jack Turner's ape and snake pit shows; a concession top; ticket wagon and side show. The side show bannerline was on the sides of two forty foot animal semi-trailers. The tent was 40 x 80-feet.

The side show, managed by Ted LaVelda, contained Tim McCoy's horse, a zebu, guanaco, a grizzly bear, two a male lions, an ocelot, two goats; Jelly Roll Rodgers four piece band with two dancers, a blade box, a small pony and large turtle, four elephants and Larry Wades' fire manipulations.

Newspaper ad used in Elwood, Indiana.

Another cage was spotted in the connection between the marquee and the big top.

The performance included Mary Rawls and Jimmy Conners, tight wire; clowns Carry and Ted LaVelda; Dave Hoover's five male lions; Jimmy Conners, juggling and rola-bola; Rawls Family, trampoline; Eddie Mason's pony drill; swinging ladders; Bertha Conners. dog act; Dick Shipley with plank walk by small elephant; Chevrolet demonstration; Holly Slidell and Wanda Moore, webs; liberty horses worked by Jack Moore; Connors pony riding dogs and monkey; a high school horse presented by Eddie Moore; revolving ladder by Dave and Holly Slidel, and three elephants worked by Dick Shipley

The final act was Col. Tim McCoy with whip, shotgun and Indian sign language demonstration.

The show entered Ontario, Canada at Sarnia on July 7 and stayed in the Dominion until August 5, returning to Michigan at Newbury. The business in Canada was big. The season closed at Mt. Pleasant, Texas on October 27. Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

ESTABLISH YOUR CIRCUS LEGACY!

Circus World's courtyard is now a green space with walkways and colorful maple trees. At the heart of the area is a 20-foot ring encircling a granite marker proclaiming the National Landmark status of the Ringling Bros. winter quarters. Above this fly the National and State flags; surrounded by shrubbery and flowers in vibrant colors.

We would like to make our cherished friends and supporters a permanent part of this beautiful space; recognizing their many contributions to Circus World. **This is your opportunity to obtain a personalized brick that will encircle the Ringlingville marker.** This "Ring of Honor" will become an enduring symbol of your devotion to the heritage and preservation of the American circus!

For more information on the Ringlingville "Ring of Honor" project, go to www.CircusWorldMusem.com

PLEASE FILL IN THIS PORTION, CUT OFF AND MAIL. BRICKS WILL BE INSTALLED THIS COMING SPRING.

CIRCUS WORLD
A WISCONSIN HISTORIC SITE

(Write the total number you would like to order next to each item.)

__ 4"x8" Brick $250
__ 8"x8" Brick $350

Grand Total $_____

Checks should be made payable to: **Circus World Museum Foundation, Inc.**

4" X 8" BRICK LINES 1-3 ONLY

8" X 8" BRICK ALL 6 LINES MAY BE USED

Please call Rob Richard at 608-356-8341 for more details.

PLEASE CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD

❑ VISA ❑ MASTER CARD ❑ AMERICAN EXPRESS ❑ DISCOVER CARD

AMOUNT _____

CARD # _____ EXP. DATE _____

NAME ON CARD _____

SIGNATURE _____

Below is the personalized message I would like engraved on my dedication brick.

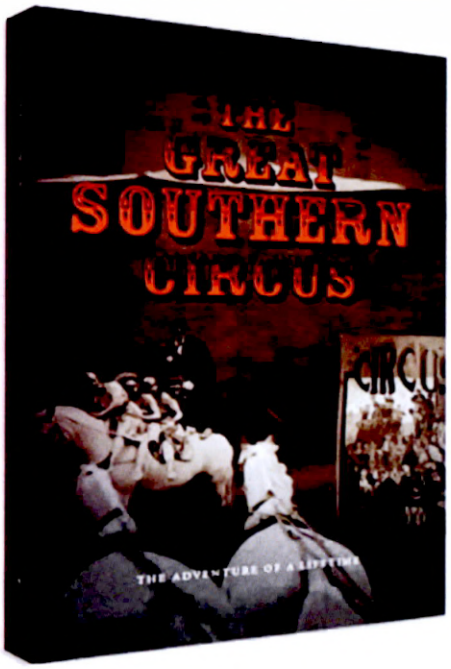
Please Note: No more than 14 characters per line, including spacing and punctuation. Be sure to leave appropriate spaces between words. **Periods, commas, and all other punctuation marks count as a space.**

Engraved imprints will be in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Circus World Museum Foundation, Inc. reserves the right to review brick engraving inscriptions for appropriateness

Please print your message clearly in blue or black ink.

Line 1														
Line 2														
Line 3														
Line 4														
Line 5														
Line 6														

MAIL TO: CIRCUS WORLD - 550 WATER STREET - BARABOO, WI 53913



In this riveting first novel by Nick West, you will travel with the performers of Orton and Older's Great Southern Circus from 1859 through 1861. A tour that began in Portage, Wisconsin and traveled through the southeastern states in the turbulent years just before the Civil War. In horse-drawn wagons, they traversed the Great Smoky, Appalachian, and Blue Ridge Mountains… twice.

In a little over two years, the circus traveled miles equal to a journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back, through frontier country where there were no paved roads, few bridges, and poor directions between towns. They braved bad weather, illness, outlaws, accidents, and fire with every day presenting a new challenge. Despite these difficulties, ***The Great Southern Circus*** tells the true story of that tour.

All the characters in this book were real people, and every incident mentioned in this narrative actually happened during that long journey. At the heart of this tale is a love story of a girl who performed with the circus and the young man who joined the circus just to be near her. ***The Great Southern Circus*** also tells the story of a young black man who joined the circus to search for his sister, a slave somewhere in the South. This is the story of lifetime friendships formed during that tour; friendships that would bond men and women from the North and South, black and white, in a love for each other that transcended the horror of War.

You may order from the publisher at:
www.xlibris.com/TheGreatSouthernCircus.html

Or if you would like a personalized autographed copy from the author you can telephone (352-495-9858